

The Mennonite Brethren Church

The Mennonite Brethren Church

By

JOHN H. LOHRENZ



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**THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED**

To the memory of those brethren who, by God's grace, have in the past contributed toward the establishment and expansion of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and have been called to their Heavenly Home;

To those of the Mennonite Brethren Church who, constrained by the love of Christ, are at present ministering His Holy Word in churches, serving Him in the various spheres of Home Mission effort, and witnessing to the saving power of the Gospel on the Foreign Mission fields; and

To the young people of the Mennonite Brethren Church who, having received a blessed heritage, will in the future be called by their Master to bear the banner of the cross and continue the illustrious work begun by the early brethren.

First Edition 1950

PREFACE

Two principal works, relating the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church, have thus far been published. The comprehensive volume, written by P. M. Friesen, "Alt-Evangelische Menno-nitische Bruderschaft in Russland, 1789-1910," was published in Russia in 1911. The second production, "Geschichte der Menno-niten Brudergemeinde, 1860-1924," prepared by J. F. Harms, was printed in America in 1924. These two books have appeared in the German language only.

Leading brethren in the M. B. Church have for some time voiced their opinion that a history of the M. B. Church should be written in the English language and be made available for its constituency. The Board of Foreign Missions of the M. B. Church has encouraged me to write a History of the Mennonite Brethren Church and has expressed its readiness to sponsor its publication.

From my youth the Mennonite Brethren Church has been very dear to me and its history has been a subject for study which has interested me greatly. During the past year I have written this treatise. It has been my endeavor to include all the important facts and events that have a definite bearing upon the Mennonite Brethren movement and to give a fair treatment of the historical course of the church.

The Bibliography, at the close of the book, indicates the source material which has been consulted in its preparation. I have not cumbered the pages of the text with foot notes and references to sources and, therefore, wish to acknowledge that the publications listed in the bibliography have been the main sources upon which I have drawn.

This volume may serve as a text book for a study of Mennonite Brethren History in schools and in study groups, as well as an informative book for general reading. It is the prayer and hope of the writer that this book may be a help and blessing to the readers, that it may give them an understanding of the experiences and activities of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and that it may create in them an appreciation for the principles and ideals held dear by the church.

John H. Lohrenz.

Hillsboro, Kansas,
December, 31, 1949.

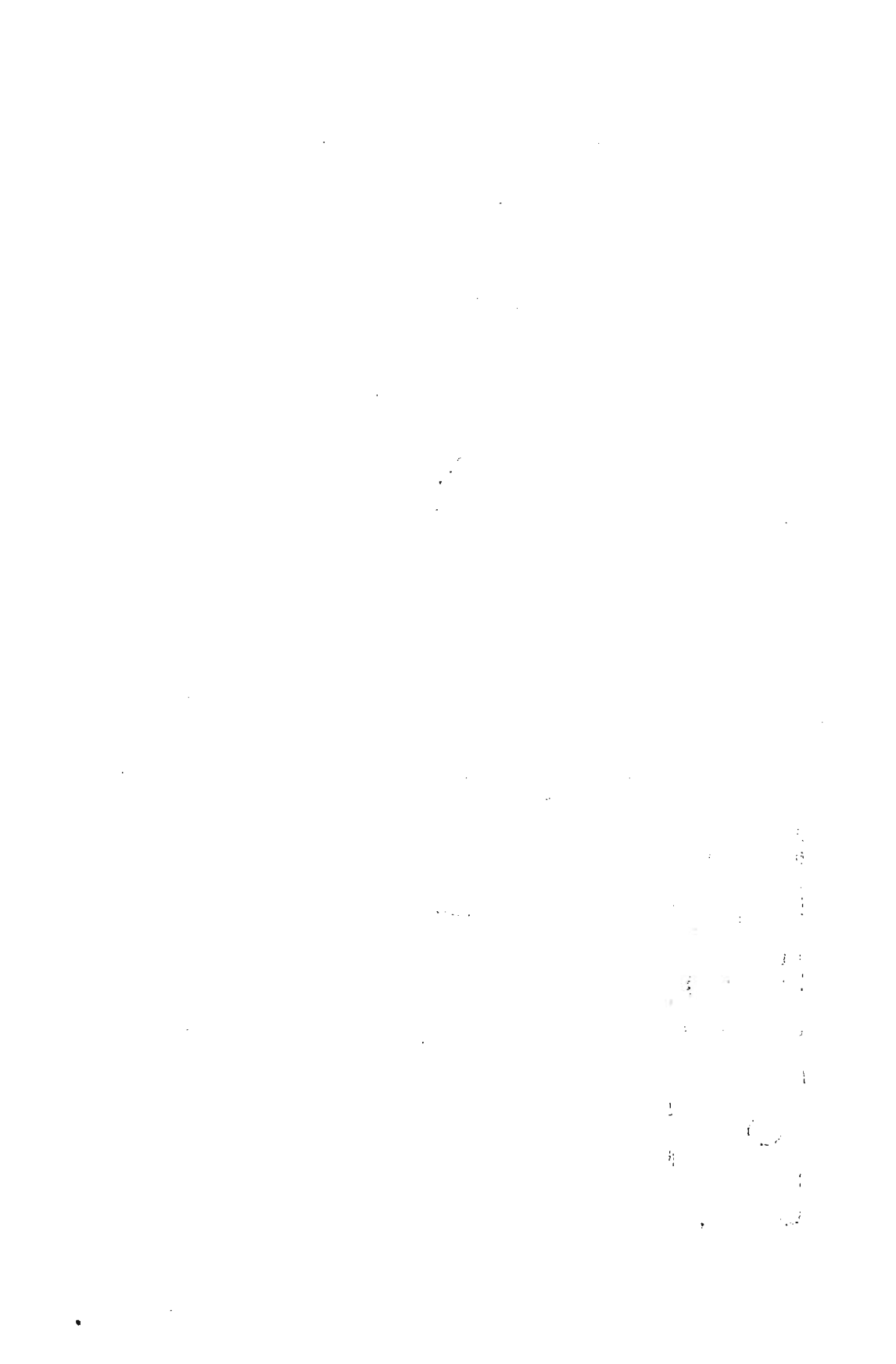


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. Beginning of the Mennonites in Central Europe	13
PART ONE. <i>The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia</i>	18
Chapter I. The Mennonites of South Russia: Antecedents of the Mennonite Brethren. 1789-1860.....	18
Chapter II. Beginning and Early History of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia. 1860-1872.....	27
Chapter III. The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia Since 1872	40
PART TWO. <i>The Mennonite Brethren Church in North America</i> 61	
Chapter IV. Beginning of the M. B. Church in America. 1874-1888	61
Chapter V. The M. B. Church and Its Activities as a Conference. 1888-1909.....	78
Chapter VI. The M. B. Church and Its General Conference Activities. 1909-1924.....	94
Chapter VII. The M. B. Church and Its General Conference Activities. 1924-1949.....	108
Chapter VIII. The Southern District Conference of the M. B. Church. 1910-1949	129
Chapter IX. The Central District Conference of the M. B. Church. 1910-1949	147
Chapter X. The Pacific District Conference of the M. B. Church. 1910-1949	159
Chapter XI. The Canadian Conference of the M. B. Church. 1910-1924	177
Chapter XII. The Canadian Conference of the M. B. Church. 1924-1949	192
PART THREE. <i>The Mennonite Brethren Church and Its Missions In Other Lands</i>	
Chapter XIII. The M. B. Mission and the Telugu M. B. Church in India. 1899-1949.....	229

Chapter XIV. The M. B. Church and Its Indigenous Church in China. 1911-1949.....	250
Chapter XV. The M. B. Mission and Its Indigenous Church in the Belgian Congo. 1912-1949.....	260
Chapter XVI. The M. B. Church and M. B. Missions in South America. 1930-1949.....	271
PART FOUR. <i>Biographical Sketches of Leading Men of the Church</i>	287
Bibliography	333

INTRODUCTION

It is surprising that a book so necessary should be so late in appearing. For years repeated demands for a written and organized account of the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church have made evident its need. The only recourse to an over-all account of the origin and growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church has thus far resided in the invaluable "Geschichte der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde" by J. F. Harms, written in the German language and concluding the account with the year 1924. Other accounts of M. B. history are only fragmentary.

The author, John H. Lohrenz, has undertaken to compile facts, figures and events covering the entire period of the church beginning in 1860 and up to and including the year 1948. The acquaintance with pertinent facts, events and movements in the church has required considerable time and intensive effort. Much of the material assembled during years of study needed to be sorted and re-organized. The author prepared his first manuscript, covering the years 1860 to 1919, for a Master's Thesis in 1919. The thesis, though only in typewritten form, has been frequently referred to by students of history, and freely used for reference by teachers and clergymen. When the proposition of publishing the thesis was presented to the author, he graciously offered to rewrite the entire account and bring it up to date. In order to make time available for the preparation of the present history, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church agreed to allow Missionary Lohrenz sufficient furlough time and financial aid to prepare the new manuscript for printing.

From the angle of the Board of Foreign Missions the book is valuable not only because it covers the history of the M. B. Church but also because it contains the account of the India mission written by one who himself, with his wife, has labored there for 27 years

at the time of writing. Besides writing about the India work of which he has been a part, the author also covers the other mission fields of the M. B. Conference.

Two features of additional value in the history are the pictures of some 70 leaders of one phase of Conference activity or another, and the 174 short biographies of leading men or women.

The entire book is savoured by the author's love for our blessed Lord and Master and his warm appreciation for the Mennonite Brethren Conference and its Kingdom activities.

A. E. Janzen
Executive Secretary and Treasurer
BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

July 7, 1950

THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

BEGINNING OF THE MENNONITES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and
the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
Matt. 16:18.

Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church." The building of His Church began on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given, and the process is continuing throughout this present age. Our Lord has always had His true followers and faithful witnesses; those who were "saved by grace through faith," who were regenerated through the Holy Spirit, and who were true to His holy Word.

Those among the Mennonites, who are truly born again constitute a part of that glorious Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. Mennonite History of more than four centuries offers innumerable examples of deep devotion to their Lord, of exemplary conduct and holy living, of heroic firmness in "contending for the faith," and of sacrificial service for their Master.

The Mennonite Brethren Church, which is one of the numerous branches of Mennonites, has had and continues to have a definite place to fill and an important work to do in God's program. The historical course and the varied activities of the Church shall be set forth in this book. In order to understand the Mennonite Brethren Church in its setting and its position, a brief reference to the BEGINNING OF THE MENNONITES IN CENTRAL EUROPE is essential.

1. The Anabaptist Movement in Europe During the Sixteenth Century

With the beginning of the Protestant Reformation Movement in central Europe during the 16th century, appeared the Anabaptists. To what extent they have had the Waldensians and kindred groups as antecedents is a point of conjecture with historians. They were first found at Zurich, Switzerland, as early as 1522. Their leaders in the beginning had some connection with Zwingli, but

soon separated from him. These early dissenters called themselves "Brethren." Since they repudiated infant baptism, and practiced baptism only upon a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ, they were called Anabaptists; in Germany—"Wiedertaeufer." As far as their position on baptism was concerned they preferred to call themselves "Taufgesinnte" in Germany and "Doopsgezinte" in Holland.

These early Anabaptists regarded Jesus Christ as the Head of His Church, adhered to the Bible and read it much in their homes and gatherings, and endeavored to live according to its teachings. They regarded conversion through faith in Jesus Christ as a definite experience and stressed right conduct and upright living. Due to persecution, they met in their homes and often secretly at night. Here they read the Bible, exhorted one another, prayed and sang. New converts were examined and then baptized, either by sprinkling or by immersion and received into the fellowship of the Church. The "Breaking of Bread" or "Our Lord's Supper," was practised among them in commemoration of our Lord's death. Their attempt was to reproduce and practice the primitive apostolic form of church life.

The Anabaptists were severely persecuted almost from the beginning; first by the Roman Church and later also by Lutherans and Calvinists. Due to instigation civil authorities also oppressed and persecuted them. Religious tolerance was at that stage of European history inconceivable. Since they refused to hold office or bear arms in warfare, they became an embarrassment to the authorities. They were driven from their homes, banished, imprisoned, sentenced to death. The first known martyr is Felix Manz, drowned at Zurich, January. 5, 1527. Scores of others soon met the same fate. Some were drowned, others were beheaded or burned at the stake or buried alive. The cruel tortures exacted by these persecutors defy description. The only charge against the Anabaptists was that they were determined to serve God according to the dictates of their conscience.

The Anabaptist movement spread rapidly. From Switzerland the persecuted went across the border into southern Germany, then into central Germany, and others went down the Rhine toward northwestern Germany. Augsburg and Strassburg became noted places of refuge and centers for these groups. Soon they reached the Netherlands, where they likewise established themselves. They continued to preach, to spread, and to increase in numbers. They

held their faith dearer than their life and could not be exterminated. In the Netherlands they gained so many adherents that the movement became predominantly Dutch. Some of the Brethren also went to Tyrol, Moravia, and Austria. Wherever they went persecution followed in their trail and became their lot.

2. Menno Simons and His Work

When the Anabaptist movement gained ground in the Netherlands, Menno Simons, a Roman Catholic priest came into contact with these brethren. He heard of a man named Sieke Freerks, who had been executed at Leuwarden because he had been baptized a second time. This made on Menno a deep impression and he began to search the Scripture with reference to baptism and found no grounds for infant baptism. He discussed the matter with learned Roman priests, who maintained that in baptism the



Menno Simons

inherited sin was washed away. This Menno could not reconcile with the Biblical teaching on the atonement through the blood of Christ. In 1536 he was converted, renounced the priesthood and the Roman Church, and united with the Brethren.

Menno Simons was of peasant origin, born at Witmarsum, northern Holland, in 1496. He early prepared for the priesthood which he entered at the age of twenty-eight. After his conversion he studied his Bible intensively, traveled widely, and where he came, he preached very effectively. In 1537 he was ordained to the ministry and for seven years he served the congregations in

Westfriesland as elder. Soon he became the outstanding leader of the Anabaptists and was, therefore, singled out by the persecutors, so that he had to wander about with wife and children for many years and live in comparative secrecy. His labors have been in various parts of the Netherlands, and northern Germany; principally at Emden, Koeln, and Wismar. In his declining years Menno lived at Oldesloe, Holstein, where he and a group of his people had established the village Wuestenfeld. Here he died in 1561.

Menno Simons was a voluminous writer, and soon after his death his works were published. From his writing we learn that he stressed the new birth and maintained that the Church of Jesus Christ was composed of the regenerated only. He repudiated infant baptism and held the fundamental views of the Anabaptists: non-resistance and the refusal to participate in warfare, religious tolerance, separation of state and church, opposition to capital punishment, objection to the oath and to holding of public offices. In the application of the ban in church discipline he and his associates went rather far, and this led to some dissension and division in the church.

Though Menno Simons never founded a church organization, nor wished that his followers should be named after him, his name has, nevertheless, adhered to the groups of followers who retained and upheld the doctrinal position and the peaceful views which he maintained. A Christian Church body bearing the name Mennonites thus came into existence and has continued to the present day. Dirk Philips, a contemporary of Menno, was, next to him, the most influential leader of the early Mennonites. It is to be regretted that through internal dissensions, two factions among the Mennonites formed,—the Friesians and the Flemish.

3. Spread of the Mennonite Church to Prussia

The persecutions of the Mennonites and of other Anabaptists continued with short interruptions in Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. Many died a martyr's death. The Book of Martyrs, "Martyrerspiegel" compiled by Van Braght in 1660, contains extensive records of the deaths of hundreds of martyrs in Holland. From this book we learn of the cruel methods of execution resorted to. Burning at the stake under a slow fire was a common practice; sometimes a bag of powder tied to the victim's neck hastened his death. Women were often tied up in bags and thrown into the

water to drown. Occasionally some were buried alive. Some were fastened to a rack and stretched until their bones cracked and blood gushed forth. Many were tortured in the most gruesome way in order to force a recantation or a betrayal of the hiding place of their brethren. Seldom, however, even under the greatest pain, have they denied their Lord or betrayed their fellow members.

As a result of these severe persecutions many left their home and country and earthly belongings and fled to other lands. Some went to England; a large number crossed the Atlantic and settled in the colony of Pennsylvania; and many others traveled eastward and found a place of refuge in East Prussia.

The first Mennonites to settle along the Vistula in Prussia, came from 1540-1550, and were mainly of Dutch stock. They established their churches and for a long time used the Dutch language in their worship services. To these were joined others coming from Moravia, Bohemia, and Austria, and in 1711 some from Switzerland. Here in East Prussia they drained vast stretches of swamp land and transformed the same into a prosperous agricultural area. While under Polish rule they endured some oppression but not severe persecution. With the dismemberment of Poland in the second half of the eighteenth century, this area came under the rule of the Hohenzollern Kings of Prussia. These at first treated the Mennonites with much toleration. Later they, however, came into conflict with them because of their refusal to do military service.

Toward the close of the eighteenth century new regulations were made by which Mennonites were obliged to pay heavy tribute for the support of military training schools and were prohibited from purchasing land except from Mennonites. They were forbidden to propagate their sect except among their descendants. These regulations and restrictions resulted in poverty and in a decline in education, morals, and religious life. Amid such conditions many began to look for new homes. Some went to America, while others emigrated to Russia. Their history and the rise of the Mennonite Brethren Church from among them we shall see in the following chapters.

PART ONE

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia

CHAPTER I

THE MENNONITES OF SOUTH RUSSIA; ANTECEDENTS OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN

1789—1860

Toward the close of the eighteenth century Russia acquired vast territory through her wars with Turkey. The empress, Catharine II, wished to secure new settlers for this area and was especially anxious to get good farmers in order that they might develop this country and also that they might teach the Russian peasants better methods of agriculture.

The Mennonites in Prussia were noted for their industry, thrift, and success in farming, and since it was known that these were considering migrating to another country where they might expand, the empress sent Baron von Trappe, a noted Russian army officer, as her personal representative to the Mennonites at Danzig to confer with them. Through him she made to the Mennonites a very liberal offer, in case they would come and settle in her newly acquired domains. Each family settling in South Russia was to receive 65 desjatin (about 180 acres) of land free, and aid for transportation and the building of their houses was promised. Religious freedom was assured to them and total exemption from all military obligations was guaranteed.

1. The Mennonite Colonies of South Russia

When the news of Empress Catharine's offer spread among the Mennonites in Prussia many became enthusiastic over emigrating to Russia. In the spring of 1787 the two men, Johann Hoeppner and Jacob Barsch were sent to Russia as a representative deputation in order to investigate the prospects for migrating and settling there. These men were received royally by the Empress herself, and her officials traveled with them as far south as the Crimea and showed them the stretches of land where the Mennonites might settle. The deputation was very favorably impressed

and returning to Prussia, they reported to their own people of the good prospects for colonization in Russia.

From spring to fall in 1788 several groups of Mennonites, in all 230 families, left their homes in Prussia and immigrated into Russia. Because of unrest in southern Russia and due to other delay, the whole party was compelled to winter at Dubrovna, on the upper part of the Dnieper River. In the following spring they moved southward and established a settlement along the Chortiza River, a branch of the Dnieper, in the province Ekaterinoslav. Others joined them some time later, so that the settlement was composed of 400 families. This colony is sometimes called the Chortiza Colony because of its location, but more frequently the Old Colony, because it was the first among the Mennonite colonies in Russia.

The Chortiza Colony. These settlers of the Chortiza Colony suffered severe hardships during their pioneer years. Most of them had been of the poorer class to begin with and had been fed by the Russian government during their first winter at Dubrovna. Upon arrival at Chortiza they were dissatisfied with the land. Some at first refused to settle down and blamed the two deputies, Hoeppner and Bartsch, most severely. Others, more optimistic, examined the land, pronounced it good and began to establish their homes. Contagious diseases raged among them the first winter and swept away many.

The religious life of the colony left much to be wished for. There being no minister among them, they wrote for advice on church matters to their mother churches in Prussia. From there the elders advised that they elect ministers out of their own midst. This was done and proved to be satisfactory. A minister was also sent to them, but he soon died. One of the greatest difficulties was that the two factions, Friesians and Flemish, were at constant strife with each other. Various disputes regarding industrial matters also arose. Some were dissatisfied with their leaders, Hoeppner and Bartsch, and had them excommunicated. Bartsch was later received back into the church, but Hoeppner remained separated from it to the end of his life. Forsaken by those whom he had served so well, he died and was buried on his own estate. The Chortiza Colony consisted of eight villages to begin with and later grew and spread out. New tracts of land were purchased by the colony where families without land settled. In 1824 the colony numbered 18 villages.

Being concerned about the privileges promised to them by the government, the colonists sent a special delegation to St. Petersburg

to procure a written guarantee or charter from the new Czar ,Paul I. This charter was at last granted in 1800. In this document were enumerated and assured to them for all time all the privileges promised them from the first.

b. *The Molotschna Colony.* A second colony, of Prussian Mennonites was begun south of the Chortiza Colony in the province Taurida. Since this was located along the small Molotschna River, the colony received the name Molotschna Colony. Here the Russian government granted a tract of 360,000 acres of land for settlement. The first group of settlers arrived in 1803 and included 342 families. More settlers continued to come for a number of years and by 1840 about 750 families had come from Prussia and settled here.

This colony has also had its difficulties to encounter during the early years. To the north of them were a number of Lutheran villages, which made that side comparatively safe. To the South, however there lived a tribe of Tartars and these ravaged and plundered the Mennonite villages, even killing some of the people. After continuous disturbances the Russian government came to the rescue of the settlers and removed the Tartar tribe from this area.

The country along the Molotschna was an open plain and the soil was fertile. The colony, though beginning in poverty, soon prospered. During the early years it was composed of eighteen villages. As the population increased, more land was purchased and new villages were built. By 1860 here were fifty villages, having a population of 18,000 and the two colonies together numbered 30,000.

c. *Industrial and Economic Development of the Colonies.* The need for self-protection made it advisable for these Mennonites to settle in villages. As a rule twenty to thirty families lived in one village. A village street was laid out and an equal number of farm yards, "Wirtshaften," were measured off on each side of the street, all of them the same size and according to the same plan. All the buildings on one farm-yard were usually under one roof; the residence faced the street, then came the granary, the threshing floor and the barns. This made a rather long building, but it was practical for those times and conditions. The village was supposed to be a model agricultural establishment. A certain amount of land was apportioned among the several families and the rest was kept as common property for future use. A common pasture was maintained and each village had its herdsman.

The chief occupation of these Mennonites was that of growing small grain crops: wheat, rye, barley, oats, and flax, and of raising cattle and sheep. Mulberry trees were planted and the silk industry thrived in some of the villages for some time. Orchards were planted and a number of varieties of the finest fruits were grown. Toward the close of the century many became engaged in various other industries.

Some time after the Mennonite colonies had been established many Jewish villages were started on the plains of South Russia. The Mennonites being far superior to the Jews in agriculture, the government selected a few expert farmers, "Musterwirte," from among them and placed these in Jewish villages in order to teach the Jews better methods of farming.

An industrial Society, "Wirtshaftlicher Verein," was organized in each colony, in which was vested some political authority. This organization did much to further the advancement of agriculture. Superior stock was now raised, better varieties of seed were procured, and the soil was tilled more scientifically. A grain magazine was built in each village in order to store up grain to prevent scarcity or famine in years of crop failures. John Cornies is noted for his efforts to bring about the improvement in industry and the advance in education.

d. *The Political Control of the Colonies.* Never has a government been so liberal toward the Mennonites as was the Russian government during the years, 1789-1880. The colonies were granted a large measure of self-government; when they first came, they were for several years exempted from taxation; they enjoyed religious freedom and exemption from all military service.

The Czar who was the supreme ruler of the colonies, appointed an administrative board, composed of a director and two assistants, which had jurisdiction over the colonies. This board resided at Odessa and its functions were mainly of a judiciary nature. This board has had several noted men, who helped the Mennonite colonies much, but more often it was composed of dishonest men, who sought only their own gain and instigated trouble.

At the head of each colony was a superintendent, "Oberschulze," and his office with its secretaries was called the "Gebietsamt." This Gebietsamt had authority to administer punishment for ordinary offences, to hold court, and to regulate matters of local concern in the villages. Capital offences were tried only by Russian courts. The superintendents were elected by representatives from the villages. Each

village was ruled by an official, "Schulze," whose duty it was to preserve order, to enforce the laws, and to preside at all the village meetings. Each village elected its school teacher and its herdsman, apportioned its land, and took care of its destitute and poor. Church officials gradually came to exercise considerable authority. Since 1850 the seven church elders formed a Church-Convent, "Kirchenconvent," which assumed some political authority and ruled the Church rather autocratically.

e. *Internal Defects in the Colonies.* In spite of the industrial prosperity and the manifold privileges the colonies enjoyed there were some marked defects in their political, industrial, educational, social, and religious life. The political arrangements often proved to be inadequate for the needs; the Board of Administration was frequently composed of dishonest men; the Gebietsamt many times lacked strong men; the village meetings frequently were of a disorderly nature and failed to serve their intended purpose. Discord and dissatisfaction often prevailed.

The greatest problem was that of providing land for the rapidly increasing population. Very soon all the land held as common village property was apportioned. The more industrious and more capable class gradually acquired most of the land. A class division developed as a result of this and for many years serious strife prevailed between the land-owners and the tenant class. Many of the poorer people rented or leased land from the Tartars or from Russian barons; yet in time rent became so high that this worked serious hardships. In 1860 over three thousand families in the Molotschna Colony were without land. They petitioned the government for aid and finally the colonies were able to meet the needs in part by purchasing several large tracts of land for new settlements. New colonies were later also founded in more distant parts of the empire; in Caucasia, Russian Turkestan, Russian Poland and Siberia.

One sad defect was that education was for five decades sorely neglected. The Russian government had given the matter of education entirely into the hands of the colonists. These were at first struggling with poverty, then they became much occupied with material pursuits, and thus very little attention was given to the schools for a long time. The first and second generation of Russian Mennonites, therefore, grew up with comparatively little education. Later each village had its school and these schools were constantly improved. In time a number of higher schools, "Centralschulen,"

which trained teachers and prepared students for various other pursuits, were founded. Among the early educators, who rendered a worthy service to the colonies, John Cornies, Heinrich Hesse, Heinrich Franz, and Tobias Voth should be mentioned.

2. Decline of the Spiritual Life of the Colonies

The spiritual and moral life of the Mennonite colonists was not the best to begin with and continued to decline in Russia during the early decades. This decline may be attributed to the following causes: (1) There was a lack of true spiritual leaders. No ministers came with the first settlers of the Old Colony. (2) The churches made no provision for the educating and training of a ministry. (3) The continual dispute between the Friesian and Flemish elements proved to be a serious detriment to the spiritual life. (4) Pastoral care was sadly neglected. (5) The long period of strife between the land-owners and the tenants largely destroyed the brotherly relationship between the two classes.

The life and conduct of many church members was not exemplary in the least. An established custom was that of holding annual market-days in the larger towns. On these occasions many Mennonites would attend and participate in various indulgences. Many of them would return home drunk. Questionable practices, such as card-playing, dancing, and drinking were frequently carried on in connection with wedding festivals.

The ministers were as a rule not capable men, nor were they highly spiritual. Most of them, even elders, could barely read and write. Often they became involved in the most commonplace village rows. They seemingly approved of all that was going on on market days and in connection with the wedding festivals; at least they did not put forth any serious effort to prevent such misconduct.

Church services were not conducted in the most inviting and attractive manner and were usually poorly attended. In many of the churches the sermons were read from a manuscript in a monotone and were often not even the minister's own production. Singing in the services was poor and Sunday School was unknown at that time. No prayer meetings were held and the instruction in the sacred Scriptures was very meager. C. H. Wedel writes,— "Baptism was in many cases a civil rather than a religious service, it being necessary for marriage. Communion services very often did not express the real idea in the least. Church discipline was written on paper but not carried out."

3. Movements Toward a Religious Awakening

While the spiritual life in the colonies apparently declined in general, there were, nevertheless, at all times those who truly sought for a deeper spiritual experience and for a closer fellowship with their Lord. Prior to 1860 there were several movements toward a religious awakening which should be duly acknowledged.

a. *The "Kleine Gemeinde."* As a result of small prayer circles, which were held in private homes, there occurred in the Molotschna colony an awakening in the years 1812-1819. Through the influence and under the direction of Klaas Reimer, these groups were organized into a separate church-body, known as the "Kleine Gemeinde." They selected an elder and other ministers from among their own number, organized themselves as a separate church and held services of their own. Though their intentions were good and though their conduct in many instances was exemplary, they appear to have retained rather narrow views, and since their number was comparatively small, they have not exerted a profound influence upon the Mennonites as a whole.

As a church they practised strict discipline, abstained from holding offices, opposed all secular gatherings of a lighter type, believed in simple dress, avoided all luxuries, and condemned the use of tobacco. Their work was of a negative nature rather than of a positive. In their conservativeness and in their emphasis on outward matters, they gradually fell into a mere formality.

b. *The Village Gnadenfeld.* In 1835 forty families of new settlers came from Prussia and founded the village Gnadenfeld in the Molotschna colony and with this a local church. The members of this congregation had formerly been in close touch with the Moravian Brethren Church, while in Prussia, and had received an inspiration and a stimulus from this contact. The leader and elder of the church, Wilhelm Lange, was a strong and devout man. He conducted mission festivals and other meetings of a highly spiritual nature which were attended by many from the surrounding villages. For some time Gnadenfeld was the center of religious life in the colony, and later this village figured strongly in the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church. After Lange's death, improper conduct on the part of his successor and difficulties within the church largely marred the earlier wholesome influence of this congregation.

c. *Edward Wuest: His Ministry and His Influence upon the Mennonites.* The most far-reaching movement toward a religious awakening among the Mennonites was that where God used Ed-

ward Wuest. The circumstances which led him into southern Russia were as follows: A group of evangelical Pietists from Wuerttemberg, Germany, had settled south of the Molotschna colony and established the village Neu Hoffnung near Berdjansk. Being in need of a minister, this congregation called Wuest from Germany in 1845 and asked him to come to be their pastor.

Edward Wuest was a very unusual man; tall, well-built in body, and with a powerful personality. He was a man of deep emotions and of strong religious convictions. Being socially inclined, he readily adapted himself to the various classes of people with whom he had to deal. In his earlier life he had received a thorough theo-



Eduard Wuest

logical training in the university Tuebingen, Germany, and after a deep religious experience he became a Pietist.

Wuest accepted the call to Neu Hoffnung with the inner assurance that it was from God. Upon arrival he began his first sermon as follows: "You have invited me to be your pastor and to preach.—I shall preach; yet not what will tickle your ears, but what will stir your hearts. In the church, in your hearts, in your homes, behind the plows, in the field, when you harvest, when you thresh—it shall stir. Whenever I meet you I shall ask you concerning your soul's welfare. I shall not be ashamed to kneel down and pray with you until you become converted to the Saviour."

In his teaching Wuest strongly emphasized the importance of brotherly love and stressed the doctrine of free grace. He believed in living a holy life and strove to live according to the highest stand-

ards of Christian conduct. A sad event occurred in the later years of his ministry, when some of his members misinterpreted his teaching of free grace. When Wuest reproved them for inconsistent conduct, they separated from him and formed a congregation of their own. Wuest died in the summer of 1859 at the early age of forty two years.

Wuest's ministry had a profound influence upon the Mennonites. Many of them attended the annual mission festivals which he conducted in his church and some also his regular services. In turn Wuest visited the Mennonite villages and held meetings for prayer and devotional Bible study in homes where he was welcome. The effect was that a general spiritual awakening was brought about in a number of villages and numerous conversions took place. These Prayer and Bible study meetings became the nucleus for the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church, shortly after the death of Wuest.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNING AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH IN RUSSIA 1860—1872

Numerous conversions had taken place in both of the Mennonite colonies during the years 1855-1860. This was largely the fruit of Edward Wuest's work, and after his death these regenerated believers continued to gather in smaller groups for prayer and for the study of God's Word. Since they had come to a newness of life, they sought for a deepening of the same and for fellowship with those of kindred mind. They called themselves "Brethren," and by those resenting the movement they were called "Brethren" in derision.

This revival movement was fraught with some manifestations which were not altogether commendable and was, therefore, misunderstood by many and severely judged by some. It must, however, be admitted, that this spiritual awakening coming over the Mennonite colonies in Russia at this time has been the most profound and far-reaching movement of its kind in the history of the Russian Mennonites. The entire Church was affected by it and to the extent that it responded to God's manifestation of grace did it share in the blessings bestowed. Under the prevailing circumstances it was but natural that the movement would lead to the formation of a new church body.

I. Formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church in the Molotschna Colony

Brethren belonging to the congregation in Gnadenfeld could not approve of the life and conduct of many of the members and felt the inconsistency of observing Communion Service with them. They approached their elder and requested that he give to them the Communion separately. To this the elder could not consent. As the Brethren continued to hold their prayer services in houses, they came to the conclusion, that it would be in accordance with God's Word to observe Communion Service among themselves. One Sunday in November, 1859, when they had gathered for prayer, they commemorated the Lord's death by closing with a Communion Service.

This event soon became known and caused a great turmoil in the existing Church. Some of the brethren were called before the Church and were asked to apologize for it and to promise that they would abstain from this in the future; others were threatened with excommunication and with the ban. The Brethren justified their act, claiming Scriptural ground for their step, and maintained that they could not conscientiously participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper with those whose walk was not in accordance with God's Word, nor could they consider it right for them to abstain from it altogether. No further steps were taken immediately, but the situation was strained.

On January 6, 1860, a number of the Brethren again met in a private home in the village Elizabethtal and took steps toward the organization of a church, separate from the existing Mennonite churches. They drew up a written statement addressed to the elders of the Mennonite churches, in which they declared themselves to be a church separate from them, yet Mennonite. The document was signed by the following eighteen men, who thus became the first members of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Abraham Cornelsen, Cornelius Wiens, Isaac Koop, Franz Klassen, Martin Klaassen, Abraham Wiens, Daniel Hoppe, August Strauss, Jacob Becker, Isaac Regehr, Andreas Voth, Jacob Wall, Johann Claassen, Heinrich Huebert, Peter Stobbe, Abraham Peters, Diedrich Claassen. Two weeks later eight more brethren joined them and approved the written declaration.

This document, submitted by the brethren, stated their reason for withdrawing from the existing church, their position with reference to faith, conduct and practices in the church, and their intention to be a Mennonite Brethren Church. They denounce the spiritual decay in the Mennonite Brotherhood and say that they can no longer participate with the same in a church. Expressing their fear of God's impending judgment for the open godless life which "crieth to heaven," they state their fear that the special privileges granted to Mennonites may be withdrawn because of the many transgressions.

In matters pertaining to faith and practice they state that baptism should be administered upon the evidence of a living faith wrought by the Spirit of God and not upon a memorized confession; that the Lord's Supper is for true believers; to strengthen them in their faith, remind them of the death of Christ and of salvation through Him, bring them into closer communion with the Lord, and unite all true believers into close fellowship with one another. With reference to ministers in the church they state that these are, ac-

cording to Scripture, either chosen by a direct call from God, or through the meditation of the church by election or selection. With reference to discipline in church the position taken is, that when members live a sinful life, they are to be excommunicated, when a believer, however, falls into sin and repents and receives forgiveness, the church is to receive him again. They conclude by stating that in other points of their profession they also agree with Menno Simons.

The complete document is given by Friesen in "*Alt Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Ruszland*," by Regier in "*Kurzgefaszte Geschichte der Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde*," and by Harms in "*Geschichte der Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde*." This declaration cannot be regarded as a Confession of Faith. For that, it was composed too hurriedly and too much under the influence of the immediate circumstances. It was, however, a statement which reveals the causes for the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and which gives the position held by the early Brethren.

The written declaration was submitted to the elders constituting the Church Convent, with the intimation that in case any matters should arise, which referred to their church, they were to confer with Abraham Cornelsen, Isaac Koop, and Johann Claassen. Five of the elders met and declared that such an organization could not be permitted under any circumstances and referred the case to the political officials of the colony, the "Gebietsamt" at Halbstadt. The official, "Oberschulze," forbade under heavy penalty the holding of any religious meetings of a secret or private nature in the colony. An official circular was issued and sent to all the village officials, "Schulzen," informing them of the brethren and instructing them to see that no religious meetings would be held privately in homes.

The brethren in their reply declared that their intention was not in the least to form a secret society, that their chief concern was to lead souls to Christ, and that they only wished to continue as an organized church in a peaceful way. The three brethren, Cornelsen, Koop and Claassen, whose lot it became to bear the brunt of the attacks, were reported to the Colonial Inspector, the Russian official representative for the colony. This inspector summoned the three and after discussing the situation, advised them to procure the required permission from the Russian government to organize as a new church. He promised to assist them, and wilyly managed to get a written promise from the three in which they stated that they would refrain from taking further steps in organizing a church or holding religious meetings until they had procured permission for this from the higher Russian authorities.

The three brethren, however, found that they had been deceived, for such a permission was difficult to get and required time. In order not to embarrass the church, they took upon themselves this given promise as a personal responsibility and abstained from any church functions for the time being. Meanwhile Claassen went to St. Petersburg to obtain permission for organizing a Mennonite Brethren Church as well as to procure land for a Mennonite Brethren settlement.

The number of the Brethren continued to increase in spite of these difficulties. On May 30, 1860, they met and elected Heinrich Huebert as elder and Jacob Boecker as minister to assist him. It is not recorded how these men were ordained, but it is reported that the oldest member among the Brethren, Franz Klaassen, upon request of the whole congregation, laid his hands upon them, and in earnest prayer dedicated them for this service in the name of the Church. In 1868 Huebert was more formally ordained as elder by elder Johann Fast.

2. Beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church in the Chortiza Colony

The spiritual decline in the Chortiza colony prior to 1860 was even worse than that in the Molotschna colony. There had been a new awakening in 1853, when about fifty persons, who claimed to have been converted, grouped themselves together and held their own services. Unfortunately these were misled and the work was checked, so that a few years later the religious conditions were worse than before.

In 1859 and 1860 small groups of those seeking for a deeper spiritual life united and formed circles for prayer and devotional Bible study. They procured Christian literature and missionary publications which proved to be of some help to them from Germany. Soon these groups were also called "Brethren." The leading men among them were Abraham Unger, Heinrich Neufeld, and Cornelius Unger.

When these brethren heard of the organization of the Mennonite Brethren Church in the Molotschna colony, they made contacts with them and brethren from there came to the Chortiza colony in 1861, which strengthened the bond. Some in turn visited the church in the Molotschna and early in 1862 three of them were baptized there. On March 11, 1862, eighteen of their number were baptized at Einlage and on this day they organized themselves as a church.

The following Sunday seventeen more were baptized. Others soon followed, so that after a few months the church at Einlage, Chortiza colony, numbered 91 members.

Since the congregation had its meetings in the large village, Einlage, it received the name Einlage M. B. Church. At this time the church elected Abraham Unger and Heinrich Neufeld to be its ministers. Unger proved to be a faithful and useful minister and became the first elder of the church. Neufeld later withdrew from the ministry and Aaron Lepp was chosen in his stead and he later became Unger's successor as elder.

3. Outward Opposition and Oppression Endured by the Church

The young M. B. Church was destined to pass through a period of much opposition and even of persecution during its first years. In the Molotschna the opposition encountered immediately upon the organization of the church continued and increased in severity. The two ministers were called before the "Gebietsamt" and commanded not to baptize. The ministers felt that they could not obey this demand, and on October 11, 1860, all the brethren, thirty two in number, were summoned before the Gebietsamt and were commanded to abstain from their new church organization and to return to their former church. A month's time was given them, and the threat was made that those who would not return within that time, would be expelled from the colony. This would at that time have meant banishment to Siberia.

After the month had elapsed and the brethren had not returned to their former churches, several of the elders pronounced the ban over some of the brethren. This was a severe trial and meant the economic ruin for some. What was hard to bear for many was the continuous rough and hateful treatment by village officials and by other influential people. It never came to banishment to Siberia, but some were by circumstances compelled to leave the colony. Abraham Cornelsen, a school teacher, was relieved of his position and ousted from his village. He was compelled to take his large family to a village of the Nogiers, a nomadic tribe, and live there under the most miserable conditions. Jacob Wall was sentenced to imprisonment and hard labor. Elder Heinrich Huebert was some time later imprisoned, where he spent ten months and suffered much, so that it affected his health.

Since the threats and the oppression on the part of the church and of the civil authorities failed to oppress the Brethren movement,

the Gebietsamt decided to have Johann Claassen arrested. He had meanwhile returned from St. Petersburg and was considered to be the most influential member. A friend informed Claassen of this intention just in time, and Claassen left the same night for St. Petersburg. This was in November, 1860. He continued to work there for the recognition of the M. B. Church nearly two years, and though he was not fully successful, he at least procured a tract of land along the Kuban River in the Caucasus for a settlement of the Mennonite Brethren. In December, 1860, the Brethren wrote to the Administrative Board in Odessa, explaining their position and appealing for the right to continue as an M. B. Church in the colony. This had so much effect that it gave more clemency to the Brethren.



Heinrich Huebert

Meanwhile the struggle for the existence and recognition of the M. B. Church continued. In November, 1862, the Orloff Mennonite Church gave recognition to the M. B. Church and their elder, Johann Harder, wrote a letter to the Brethren in which he informed them of their position. The Gebietsamt, however, did a very disgraceful thing in December, 1863. It sent out circulars to all the village officials, stating that the marriages performed by the Brethren were to be regarded as illegal, that those united in marriage by them were to be considered as living in adultery, and that the children born to such unions were to be classed as illegitimate.

In the Chortiza colony the oppression suffered by the Brethren was even more severe than in the Molotschna. Even before

the church was organized, aggressive measures were taken to prevent all religious gatherings of a private nature. Village officials were instructed to enforce these measures. Some of the brethren suffered severe persecutions. William Janzen, who was known to attend the prayer meetings, was summoned before the village official and asked to promise that he would not attend the meetings any more. When he refused to make such promise, he was imprisoned. After several days he was again called and asked, and when he still refused, his clothing was torn from him and he was given a flogging until his back was bleeding. After that he was



Johann Klassen

imprisoned in a cold cell for two days and his fur coat was taken from him. Then he was kept in another prison three days more where he was treated with more leniency. After that he was released.

On March 27, 1862, twenty seven of the Chortiza Brethren were taken before the Gebietsamt and asked to discontinue as a church. To this they could not consent. Then they were asked to sign a paper, by which they would declare their willingness to leave the colony. This they likewise refused to do. Conditions became rather critical for them. So they sent one of their members, Ger-

hard Wieler, to St. Petersburg to work together with Claassen for the permission to continue in the colony as an M. B. Church.

On July 12, 1862, the two ministers and two other members were arrested and taken to the criminal court at Ekaterinoslav for investigation. The court found them innocent and was willing to set them free for a sum of money. The brethren knowing that this would be regarded as bribery, felt that they could not conscientiously pay this amount and, therefore, refused to do so. After two days they were set at liberty without paying the sum.

It is remarkable how bravely and patiently the Brethren bore their hardships. There do not appear to be any cases on record of members deflecting from their faith on account of oppression or persecution. Among the hardest experiences were those where individuals from a family united with the Brethren, while the other members were bitterly opposed to it. Some of the most intimate family and home ties were severed because of the conviction that love and loyalty to Christ made this necessary. By 1864 the right of the M. B. Church to continue in the Mennonite colonies as a church-body had become established and was recognized by the existing Mennonite Church and also by the Russian government.

4. Inward Testings and Difficulties Overcome by the Church

The M. B. Church continued to grow in both of the colonies during the early years when it had to face strong opposition. It seemed that affliction rather enhanced the growth, for it caused the testimony of the brethren to spread throughout all the villages. Though they were misunderstood by many and harshly judged by some there were at the same time always some enquirers who were concerned about forgiveness of sin and the assurance of salvation. Many of these found their way to the homes of the Brethren where they were led into an acceptance of Christ by faith.

Testings of a subtle nature threatened the young Church. These did not have their origin within the Church but sought entrance and in part, succeeded for a short time. During the close of Edward Wuest's ministry a faction of his followers separated from him. These had misinterpreted his teachings and in their gatherings began to give full expression to their emotions. They have been called, "Die Froehlichen," that is the Joyous. Others, who also held eccentric views, termed themselves, "Die Starken," that is, the Strong. A number of these holding such ideas had come into the Mennonite colonies prior to 1860 and had gained some adherents here and there.

When the M. B. Church began, these tried to influence its members and to win them over to their teachings, and they succeeded in winning over some of them. This would not have been a serious matter, had the church already been more fully established and had the opposition from without not been so strong. Elder Huebert found their teaching to be unsound and un-Biblical, and opposed them from the beginning. He was, however, often sick and unable to attend the meetings and for ten months he was kept in prison. Johann Claassen, a man of influence, was in St. Petersburg at the time when the trouble occurred. At this time two young members assumed control of the church and gained some adherents. They then began a rather arbitrary rule and declared those excommunicated who did not agree with them. A small minority thus excommunicated the majority. Even elder Huebert was declared excommunicated while he was languishing in prison.

When this arbitrary rule of the two men resulted in a rather serious discord in the church, the more thoughtful element took up the matter and eradicated the existing evils. The excommunications pronounced by the two men were not recognized, and it was decided that no minister had a right to excommunicate a church member without the decision of the church. Heinrich Huebert was reinstated as elder. All disorderly meetings, such as had been conducted by these two men and their adherents, were condemned. Those who had been guilty of these occurrences either repented and confessed their wrong and were forgiven, or were excommunicated. The inconsistencies were thus eradicated in the Molotschna M. B. Church.

Similar difficulties occurred in the M. B. Church of the Chortiza Colony. Here Gerhard Wieler, an influential young man, accepted the views of the "Froehlichen" and began to advocate them in the church. Elder Unger tried to prevent the disturbance from gaining ground, but he failed because his associate minister took side against him. Wieler now put up some very unreasonable regulations and presented them in such a way that some accepted them: women should not appear in services except in a special bonnet; pictures and wall mottos in the homes were declared sinful; valuable religious books were condemned and burned.

At last Elder Unger lost control of the congregation and resigned. Some of the brethren from the Molotschna then came and helped to restore order. Gerhard Wieler, who had been the chief cause of the troubles, was at that time in prison for having baptized some Russians, and after his release did not continue with

the M. B. Church. Other members who had been guilty of misconduct either earnestly repented and were forgiven, or were expelled from the fellowship of the church.

It is to be regretted very much that these unruly elements gained some entrance into the M. B. Church and that they were able to manifest their misconduct to some extent. Though the M. B. Church never advocated such teachings or approved the things done by them, the fact that some of the impulsive spirit of the "Froelichen" found expression in meeting, brought the brethren into discredit at the time, weakened their influence and their testimony, and probably prevented some earnest souls who otherwise would have done so from uniting with them. It, however, stands to the credit of the M. B. Church that it emerged victoriously in the conflict against this movement, which at a critical time threatened to overcome the young Church; that it has by God's grace cleansed itself and completely eradicated such elements as soon as possible; that it has severely judged itself in the days of its infancy and has taken a definite stand against anything it found to be contrary to the clear teachings of God's Word.

5. Establishment and Expansion of the Church

While the M. B. Church strove to attain its right for existence in the Mennonite colonies and while it sought to combat the unwholesome elements that tried to gain entrance and control, the establishing of the church progressed and its expansion gained momentum.

One of the first questions confronting the church was that of the form of baptism. In the document of January 6, 1860, nothing had been said as to what form of baptism should be used. When, soon after this, several converts asked for baptism, the question as to what form should be adopted, came up for consideration. This led to a study of the Scriptures and to discussions regarding the matter. At last the brethren became convinced that immersion was the proper form of baptism and adopted it as the only accepted form in the M. B. Church. On September 23, 1860, the first baptism took place. The members who had formerly been baptized by sprinkling later received immersion. In the Chortiza Colony immersion was immediately adopted at the time of organization, March 11, 1862.

The meetings and worship services of the church were in the early years held in the homes of members. They consisted in hearty

singing, in much prayer, and in extensive reading from the Scriptures with devotional comment. Formal preaching of sermons was at first not common, but gradually came into use. Musical instruments were sometimes used to accompany the singing. With the exception of the time when the "Froeliche" exerted their influence, the gatherings of the brethren have been very orderly and for the edification of those present.

The years 1865 to 1872 can be regarded as a time when the M. B. Church became well established, when it enjoyed peace within, and when it entered upon a period of expansion. The church in the Molotschna centered at Rueckenau, where it procured its first assembling place by purchasing a drinking hall and transforming it into a chapel. Several years later a large and substantial church edifice was built. The Lord graciously gave to this congregation a number of competent and devout men, who became outstanding leaders and pillars of the church. The more noted ones were Daniel Fast, Johann Fast, Jacob Janz, Christian Schmidt, and Abraham Schellenberg.

The Chortiza M. B. Church had its centers at Einlage and Andraesfeld, and was in early years the larger congregation. After the internal troubles were over, Unger again regained his position as elder and Aaron Lepp became his assistant and later his successor.

Unger held a friendly attitude toward the Baptists. In 1866 August Liebig, a Baptist minister in Hamburg, Germany, visited the church. His ministry was some help and assistance to the church, especially in the regulations of its business sessions. In 1868 Gerhard Onken, likewise a Baptist minister from Hamburg, came for a short ministry. By him Unger was ordained elder and Lepp minister. Onken's ministry, however, has not been regarded as altogether wholesome or for the betterment of the church. Since he was addicted to the use of tobacco, his example and influence was detrimental to some of the members. The question as to what attitude the M. B. Church should take with reference to the use of tobacco, came up for consideration at this time. The position taken by the church was that it regarded the use of tobacco as sinful and improper for God's children and that its members should abstain entirely from its use.

In 1871 August Liebig again came to Russia and lived in the Chortiza colony one year. His ministry in effective preaching and his exemplary Christian life have been regarded as helpful to the church and have been highly cherished in the colony. Through

his influence and direction the Sunday morning prayer season preceding the sermon, was instituted and Sunday School was begun. He assisted in arranging and establishing the itinerary ministry, "Reisepredigt." When Liebig later made his home in Odessa, he frequently visited the M. B. Churches, participated in the Conferences, and worked in the spirit of the M. B. Church. He, however, remained a member of the Baptist Church.

Johann Classen had succeeded in procuring a tract of land along the Kuban River in the Caucasus for an M. B. settlement. Migration of members to this area began in 1863. Christian Schmidt, who was among the first group, had charge of the church for some time. With the coming of more settlers a fine congregation developed. In 1873 elder Heinrich Huebert, after giving the charge of the Rueckenau Church over to his assistant, Abraham Schellenberg, and ordaining him elder, also moved to the Kuban. Here he was immediately chosen elder, but his service was only for a short time. Due to failing health he resigned and Daniel Fast became his successor.

The M. B. Church spread to several other new settlements in its early years. In 1866 a group of families moved to Friedensfeld and organized a congregation of which Jacob Janz became presiding minister and later elder. Another congregation began in the colony Tiege-Sagradovka, to the west of the Molotschna, in 1872. Mennonite settlements also began farther east along the Don River in the province Mariopol. Some of the brethren moved here in 1866 and began a congregation. Abraham Cornelsen became its first minister and elder and Johann Foth his assistant. Other settlements had been made still farther east, along the Volga River. Here an M. B. Church began in 1874.

The M. B. Church convened as a church Conference for the first time at Andreasfeld, Chortiza Colony, May 14-16, 1872. The three churches, Einlage, Chortiza; Rueckenau, Molotschna; and Kuban, participated in the conference. At this conference the method of doing mission work through itinerating ministers, "Reiseprediger," was established and a Mission Committee of seven members was elected. The five ministers—Edward Leppke, Christian Schmidt, Johann Wieler, Aaron Lepp, and Daniel Fast were appointed as traveling evangelists or itinerating ministers. Since 1872 the M. B. Conference convened annually until the first World War and the Revolution made it impossible. The M. B. Conference has been the medium through which the church voiced its position and carried on in its united activities.

Statistics of church membership in early years are available only for 1872 and these are incomplete. The total M. B. Church membership then was 600; distributed as follows: Einlage, 180; Rueckenau, 164; Kuban, 150. The remaining number of about 100 were in the smaller, new settlements.

CHAPTER III

THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH IN RUSSIA SINCE 1872

In this chapter we can summarize only briefly the further growth and expansion of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia after 1872, point out the more important events, mention the outstanding activities in the homeland and on the foreign mission field, and take note of the calamities that befell the church along with other Mennonites since 1914. This chapter, therefore, records a long span of history and covers a vast territory.

1. The Russian M. B. Churches, 1872-1885

J. F. Harms has named the years 1872-1885, "Thirteen Years of Blessings" for the M. B. Church in Russia. This they were. The church not only increased and established itself more fully in the localities where it had already begun, but it also began to spread into new areas and to carry out new activities. It was a time of comparative peace, of many revivals and conversions, and of the deepening of the spiritual life of many of the members.

The Einlage M. B. Church in Chortiza continued to increase and remained all this time the largest congregation. It had affiliated branch-churches at six surrounding places. In 1873, the church, while under pressure of officials who challenged them to prove their Mennonite status, hurriedly prepared a Confession of Faith. This was printed in 1876. Since it was written at a time when the church stood in a close relationship with the Baptists, it contained much from their Confession; and since the attitude toward the existing Mennonite Church was then somewhat estranged, it included several harsh expressions about the church. This Confession of Faith, therefore, later proved to be an embarrassment rather than a help and was not fully acceptable to the Einlage Church and still less to other M. B. congregations.

The relationship with the Baptist Church was a problem with which the M. B. Church in general and the Einlage congregation in particular was concerned for a number of years. While August Liebig lived in Andreasfeld and did a good deal of preaching in

the various congregations, the relationship, between the two churches was intimate and friendly. Later Eduard Leppke, a former Baptist from Prussia, joined the M. B. Church and soon became an influential traveling evangelist. Leppke, together with some brethren of a kindred mind, took an estranged attitude toward the neighboring Baptists and influenced the M. B. Church in this way. After several years a more consistent and more brotherly relationship between the two churches evolved, so that each recognized and respected the autonomy of the other.

In the Molotschna colony Rueckenau continued to be the center of the M. B. Church, and here a large congregation developed. Three affiliated branch-churches belonged to it. Frequent revivals, leading to conversions of unsaved souls, resulted in continuous additions to the church. Of special note is the sweeping revival which occurred in 1884 and 1885. This church was blessed with a number of strong and devout leaders who left their impress upon the church.

It was during these years when the long strife between the landowners and the landless class raged in the Molotschna colony. Some of the brethren were drawn into it to their own detriment. The church, in deep penitence over this fact, took a firm position, disciplined those who were involved, and forbade its members to participate in the strife in any way.

In 1875 informal discussion-conferences on Biblical topics were instituted in the Molotschna. In these the Brethren and kindred groups of Mennonites, who desired deeper spiritual life, more knowledge of the Word, and a closer fellowship among God's children, participated. These conferences proved to be a blessing to the colony in general and to the M. B. Church in particular. Abraham Schellenberg took a leading part in them and frequently presided at the meetings.

The M. B. Church in the Kuban settlement continued to increase through the coming of more settlers as well as through conversions in their midst. The hope cherished by some that this settlement should become a haven of refuge for the Mennonite Brethren and develop into an extensive colony never materialized. The one local congregation of the Kuban, however, continued to prosper under the long ministry of elder Daniel Fast.

Several new M. B. Churches began and were organized during these years. One was that of Friedensfeld, near the Dnieper River and west of the Molotschna area. Here a number of M. B. families settled in 1867 and a congregation gradually grew up. Jacob Janz became their presiding minister and later their elder,

and Peter Fast, his assistant. In 1875 the group was fully organized as a church. Another M. B. congregation began at Tiege-Sagradofka, in the adjoining province to the west, in 1871. It flourished as an affiliated branch-church of Friedensfeld for many years and later became a separate local church.

The M. B. Church also spread to the east. A number of families settled near the Don River in 1866. Through the evangelistic efforts of the itinerating ministers conversions took place and a promising congregation began. Abraham Cornelsen led the group and became the first elder of the church and Johann Foth his assistant. There were beginnings of M. B. congregations along the Volga River in the provinces Saratof and Samara at this time. A group was organized into a church and received into the conference in 1874. Of this congregation some later went to America and the remaining ones joined the Baptist church.

The emigration of over 18,000 Mennonites from Russia to America between 1874 and 1880, was the most outstanding event of this period. It deeply affected life in the colonies and called for new adjustments. It also gripped deeply into the life and activities of the church. Of the M. B. Church about 400 members left, which meant a temporary decrease in the total membership. Several leading ministers were among those who emigrated, including Abraham Schellenberg and Johann J. Regier from the Molotschna, and Abraham Cornelsen and Johann Foth from the Don. After the emigration had subsided the churches again resumed their activities more fully and the decrease in numbers was soon replenished by further additions through conversion and baptism.

2. The Activities of the M. B. Church as a Conference Body, 1872-1885

The General Conference, "Bundes Konferenz," begun in 1872, was held annually, usually in the month of May, and became the most important uniting factor of the M. B. Church, as well as the main channel, through which it carried out its activities. The devotional services at the Conference were a source of spiritual strength and edification for the many who attended. In the deliberations during the business sessions the churches considered their important problems and solved them in as satisfactory a way as possible. The activities in which they were engaged unitedly received their due attention.

The Conference was not a legislative body which laid down laws and rules for the churches. The important decisions were referred

to the churches for approval. These decisions were, however, almost invariably accepted by all the local churches. Some of the questions which came up for consideration and disposal in early years were: the relation between the M. B. Church and the Baptist Church, the emigration to America and the consequent changes in the church, and open communion with members of other evangelical churches who agreed with them in the form of baptism.

The most important phase of Conference activity was that of home missions, which included the work of itinerating ministers and evangelists, "Die Reiseprediger." The Conference elected a committee to direct and supervise this work and made arrangements so that qualified ministers would visit all the churches and branch-churches and hold prolonged meetings. These meetings had the character of Bible exposition and of preaching for the deepening of the spiritual life of the believers as well as of evangelistic services where the unconverted were exhorted to repent and by faith accept Jesus Christ as Savior. The contributions by the churches toward Conference activities were for those days and circumstances liberal; in 1874 when the church numbered 800 to 900 members, the total amounted to 2778 Rubels, about \$1400.00. Later the contributions increased as the church grew in membership.

The Lord graciously granted to the church a number of well qualified and devoted men for this work who applied themselves to this sacred ministry in real earnestness. Travel in those years was often fraught with hardships and dangers, especially in the more distant new settlements. Frequently evangelists encountered ridicule and opposition from those of other churches, and sometimes Russian officials eyed them and their work with suspicion and hindered them. This type of ministry was, however, abundantly blessed by the Lord and was used of Him for the salvation of many. It led to a rapid growth of the churches and has been an important factor in the unification of the M. B. Church.

The year 1885 marked the twenty fifth anniversary of the beginning of the M. B. Church, an event that was celebrated throughout the Conference. Statistics compiled at this time, as given by P. M. Friesen, are as follows: six main churches; Molotschna, Einlage, Kuban, Friedensfeld-Sagradovka, the Don Settlement, the Volga Settlement; ordained elders, 4; other ministers, 35; prayer houses, 7; branch-churches affiliated with the main churches, 17; total church membership 1,800. It is wonderful that a church beginning with 18 members, numbered one hundred times that many after twenty five years, not counting those who had emigrated to America.

3. Growth and Expansion of the M. B. Church. 1885-1914

The second quarter-century of M. B. Church history, 1885-1910, marks a period of continued increase in membership and of further spreading out into new areas. When the church celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its history in 1910 it consisted of 35 to 40 fully organized local churches and a large number of smaller affiliated branch-churches. The total membership of these was 7000, which is a nearly fourfold increase during the quarter century since 1885.

Nearly all the churches already mentioned continued to increase in membership. Most of them had erected church buildings for their services, some even very large and imposing ones. The build-



David Schellenberg

ing of a church sometimes involved a congregation in difficulties because of antagonistic officials. In several cases churches already completed and used were closed temporarily upon government order. Through much prayer, continuous effort, and a more careful compliance with legal requirements, such hindrances were overcome.

a. *The Molotschna M. B. Church.* The M. B. Church in the Molotschna Colony continued to grow and expand and became the most influential and the largest of the churches. The center continued to be Rueckenau where a large church building was erected. Branch churches with church buildings of their own were established in the villages Tiege, Tiegengagen, Alexandertal, Waldheim, and Sparrau. The Molotschna M. B. Church was blessed with a number of well qualified and spiritually minded ministers. When

Abr. Schellenberg emigrated to America in 1879 the church elected Johann J. Fast as his successor. He served the church as elder for two years. In 1881 David Schellenberg was elected elder and later ordained. He has ably and faithfully served the church nearly two decades.

When the Molotschna colony established new colonies in several parts of South Russia, the M. B. Church also became established in these colonies. These congregations were at first affiliated branch-churches of the mother church in the Molotschna. Later, after they increased in membership and became more fully established, they were organized as independent local churches.

b. *The Chortiza M. B. Church.* The M. B. Church in the Chortiza Colony appears to have been less prominent toward the close of the nineteenth century than formerly. It, however, continued to show a steady growth in membership. After the brethren Unger and Lepp had completed their ministry the church in 1903 found in Gerhard P. Regehr a worthy successor and elder, and in Martin Koslowsky, his assistant. Johann Siemens who lived here carried on an extensive itinerary ministry and proved to be a great blessing to the church. Other brethren, who had been converted and joined the church after the early storm and stress period, came into the ministry and made valuable contributions. Among these were Dietrich Klassen, Peter Peters and Cornelius Fehr.

Einlage continued to be the center of the Chortiza M. B. Church. and there were a number of strong branch churches within the colony. Like the Molotschna Church the Chortiza Church had its affiliated branch churches in the newer settlements established by the Colony. Many of these later grew into large local churches and developed their own church organization.

c. *Other M. B. Churches in Russia Proper.* The M. B. Church in the Kuban settlement, Caucasia, did not grow and expand to the extent that its early founders had anticipated. It, however, had a steady increase and prospered until 1914. Elder Heinrich Huebert lived in this community from 1873 till his death in 1895. On account of his frail health he was unable to take a leading part in church activities. Christian Schmidt was an influential man and an untiring worker in the church until his death in 1905. The leadership of the church was, however, in the hands of Daniel Fast, who served as elder until 1901 when C. A. Wiens was elected elder and succeeded him.

The Miropol Colony to the west of the Molotschna and Chortiza colonies was composed of settlers coming from both these colonies.

The Friedensfeld M. B. Church was organized here in 1885, and formed a connecting link between the two colonies. Elder Jacob Janz had a long and fruitful ministry in this church. Several branch churches were formed as the church expanded. The one at Tiege-Sagradofka was affiliated with Friedensfeld for a long time but in 1902 became a separate local church. Johann Nickel was ordained elder and led the church many years. The Tiege-Sagradofka Church in turn developed a number of smaller branch congregations.

The Spat-Schoental M. B. Church in the Crimean Peninsula owed its beginning to a revival in 1883-1884 and was organized in 1885 as a branch-church of Molotschna. It grew rapidly and became one of the most influential of M. B. congregations. A large



David Duerksen

church building was erected in Spat in 1887 and a still larger one in Schoental in 1905. In 1902 the membership stood at 330 and continued to increase after that. David Duerksen, a very effective itinerating minister, was called to this church and he served there as an elder from 1897 to 1910. The Spat-Schoental M. B. Church has supplied the Russian M. B. Conference with the missionaries Heinrich Unruh and C. H. Unruh and the effective workers at home, A. H. Unruh and B. H. Unruh.

The Memrik settlement was a daughter colony of the Molotschna Colony and located to the east of it. There an M. B. congregation began in 1885 which developed into a large and strong church, numbering 350 members after seven years. Several affiliated branch churches developed later. Isaac Fast served the church as

elder for many years and was ably assisted by a number of other ministers.

Several of the affiliated branch churches of the Einlage-Chortiza M. B. Church later developed into strong local churches. The one known as Petrofka-Naumenko in the province Kharkov began in 1889 when a number of brethren bought large tracts of land. There a number of villages were established and an M. B. Church was founded in the villages Petrofka, Wassilevka, Ielenovka and Barvenkovo. The congregation grew and spread over the surrounding area and for some time enjoyed a remarkable industrial prosperity. Gerhard Siemens and Abraham Paetkau both served as presiding ministers for a number of years. Wilhelm Dyck has also lived and



Wm. Dyck

ministered there a short time. Abr. H. Unruh taught in a higher educational institution in Barvenkovo and at the same time preached frequently and very effectively in the churches. Extension mission work among Russians was undertaken and a number of them were converted. This work was, however, carried on under difficulties and on one occasion two of the brethren engaged in it were arrested.

A number of M. B. families settled also at Millerovo, near the Don River and established an M. B. congregation. Wilhelm Dyck moved into this community and served the church as elder for many years. He traveled extensively and worked very aggressively and the large church which grew up can be attributed to his efforts.

The settlement Ignatjevo in the province Ekaterinoslav under God's blessing was begun by Mennonites from the Chortiza Colony in 1888. Among them were members of the M. B. Church and they united and formed an M. B. congregation in 1889, which grew rapidly and expanded into a large church. The chief centers were Nikolajevka and New York where church buildings were erected. Elder Herman A. Neufeld has led this church and ministered to it many years. The congregation became an independent local church in 1905.

The Mennonite Brethren Church spread further northeast toward the Ural Mountains, where it was planted in the provinces Orenburg, Samara and Ufa. At Kamenka, Orenburg, the first self-sustaining local church, growing out of the Einlage-Chortiza Church, developed. This began as a small congregation in 1894 and was for a number of years without a resident minister. A revival came in 1898, which increased the membership considerably, so that a spacious house of worship could be built in 1900. Cornelius Fehr heeded a call to come and minister to the Kamenka M. B. Church and he served it as presiding elder for many years.

A second M. B. Church in the province Orenburg began at Karaguj in 1898 when settlers from the Molotschna located there. This congregation was for some time affiliated with the mother church, Molotschna, but in 1910 was organized as an independent local church.

M. B. Churches began in two Mennonite settlements in the province Samara. The one at Marienthal, Alt-Samara, began in 1886 when a group of believers formed a congregation. This church has remained small. The M. B. Church in Neu-Samara, established by settlers from the Molotschna in 1891, had its center in Lugovsk and had a more rapid growth than the one in Alt-Samara. The congregation constructed an adequate church building in 1910 and was established as an independent local church that year. Abraham Martens has served this church as elder for a number of years. Kornelius G. Neufeld was one of the leading ministers. He established and conducted the first co-educational school in the village Davlekanovo.

The M. B. Church was established and formed a colony in the province Ufa, at Gortschakovka, where Mennonites from the Molotschna leased large estates in 1894. The M. B. congregation, which had a rapid increase and was recognized as a fully organized local church in 1910, had in Wilhelm Baerg and Jac. J. Martens able and faithful ministers.

d. M. B. Churches in the more distant Mennonite Settlements.

An M. B. Church began in Deutsch-Wymyschle, Russian Poland when after a revival in 1884 a number of Mennonites accepted the immersion form of baptism and joined themselves to the Mennonite Brethren in South Russia. Frequent visitations by itinerating ministers helped to build up the church. Peter Ratzlaff was elected presiding minister and in 1895 ordained elder. He led the church many years and Johann Kliever was his assistant in the ministry. The church continued to have a steady growth but from time to time families left and emigrated to America.

A Mennonite settlement branching out from the Molotschna Colony was established in the Terek area of Trans-Caucasia, west of the Caspian Sea. In this settlement an M. B. Church began in Talma in 1901, and in 1910 it was organized as an independent local church. Jacob Doerksen served the congregation as elder and was assisted by a number of other ministers.

In 1880 and the years following a number of Mennonite families from the Molotschna Colony as well as from other settlements moved to Russian Turkestan, east of the Caspian Sea. There an M. B. congregation began which had a steady growth and by 1908 numbered 209 members. A number of families were disappointed in this new settlement and later emigrated to America. Heinrich Kroeker was elected minister and leader of the church in 1887, and was later ordained elder.

The Mennonites established three settlements in Siberia: at Omsk, at Slavogard, and at Pavlodar. Five M. B. Churches were established and organized among these settlements by 1910. The largest of these was at Tschungajevka, where elder Jacob Wiens resided. He has ministered to the M. B. congregations in Siberia with much devotion over a period of many years.

4. Activities of the M. B. Church. 1885-1914

Interest in the church and participation in its activities was greatly stimulated among the members through mission festivals, harvest festivals, church dedication services, and especially through the annual conference gatherings. The Conference continued to be the means for united expression of the church and for promoting its various activities. Home mission work as done by the itinerating ministers continued to hold its importance and to bear definite results. Men who have devoted themselves to this form of ministry in a special way and who have traveled much among the churches

were: David Schellenberg, Jacob W. Reimer, David Duerksen, Herman A. Neufeld, Wilhelm Dyck, Jacob Wall, Jacob Janz. It is of interest to note that Dr. Baedeker of the Plymouth Brethren in England, when traveling extensively in Russia, also visited the Mennonite colonies and held meetings in M. B. Churches and that J. W. Reimer for some time accompanied him as interpreter.

Publication efforts, which bear a relation to the M. B. Church, had their beginning when Abraham Kroeker, of the church in the Crimea, began the publishing of a Christian family calendar in 1897. In 1903 he also began to publish annually a Christian block-calendar as well as the periodical, "Friedenstimme." These publications were widely used in the homes of M. B. church members. The "Friedenstimme" automatically became the generally accepted organ of the M. B. Church. The publishing house, "Raduga," in Halbstadt printed this paper for many years.,

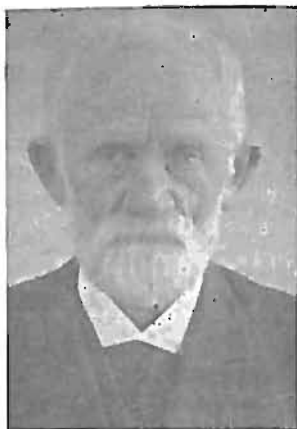


Jac. W. Reimer

Jacob Kroeker, who worked extensively as traveling evangelist and Bible expositor in M. B. circles for some time, assisted Abr. Kroeker in the editing of his publications for several years. In 1910 he went to Wernigerode, Germany, where he wrote a number of devotional books, which received a wide circulation among Mennonite readers and were much appreciated.

P. M. Friesen, a teacher and minister, has rendered valuable service to the M. B. Church by writing and publishing his voluminous work, "Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland, 1789-1910." This book, which contains much source material concerning the early history of the M. B. Church, is a highly valuable publication on the Mennonites in Russia.

For some time the M. B. Church concerned itself with the drafting of a Confession of Faith, which would, upon the basis of the Holy Scriptures, give a short statement of belief covering the fundamental Christian doctrines. The Conference in 1898 assigned to a number of brethren the work of preparing such a Confession. These brethren met and prepared one which was accepted by the Conference in 1900 and submitted to the churches for approval. After all the churches had approved it, the Confession of Faith was printed and distributed in 1902. It was adopted by the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America in 1902, and in 1917 was translated into the English.



Herman A. Neufeld

In the preparation of the Confession of Faith the brethren consulted the earlier Mennonite Confessions, especially the Rudnerweide Confession of 1853. They also made use of the document prepared by the first brethren in 1860 as well as of the Confession written by the Einlage M. B. Church in 1873. The introduction mentions that the first three Christian Church Confessions—the Apostolic, the Nicean, and the Athanasian, were made use of.

This Confession of Faith as adopted and adhered to by the Mennonite Brethren Church, gives in brief statements the cardinal doctrines of the Bible and substantiates them with Scriptural references. It also includes several other important Biblical teachings which have some bearing upon the historical course of the Mennonites. It is divided into the following ten sections: 1. Concerning God. God revealed as God the Father, Jesus Christ the

Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. II. Concerning Sin and Redemption. III. Concerning the Congregation, the Church of God or Assembly of Believers. IV. Concerning Christian Baptism. V. Concerning the Lord's Supper. VI. Concerning Matrimony. VII. Concerning the Christian Day of Rest. VIII. Concerning the Divine Law. IX. Concerning the Office of Power; the Taking of an Oath; Revenge; Non-Resistance and Love of Enemies; the Kingdom of God. X. Concerning the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment and its Execution.

The three decades preceding 1914 were a period of rapid advance for the Mennonite Colonies in Russia. This was the case economically as well as culturally. Many prospered in farming. Adding field upon field to their estates, they began to farm on a large scale. Others became engaged in manufacture and built large mills and factories. Various industries thrived.

The life of the church was affected by these changes. The M. B. Church had to guard against self-sufficiency and the coming of worldliness into its midst. At the same time these decades of prosperity offered new and greater opportunities for useful service than ever before. Many honoured the Lord with their substance and gave liberally for His cause. Others dedicated themselves and made themselves useful in various avenues of service.

There was a definite advance in education. Each village had its school with one or more well trained-teachers. In each of the colonies were several higher schools, "Centralschulen," well equipped and conducted by well-qualified teachers. Some of these were for boys, others for girls. In education all the Mennonites co-operated and, therefore, also shared in the benefits. In philanthropic efforts they likewise co-operated and established a mental hospital and a school for the deaf and dumb, as well as other institutions.

Since 1880 the Russian government required four years of service in the forestry department of the Mennonite young men because of their exemption from military training and service. The Colonies were responsible for the expenses involved, and had to erect the barracks, feed and clothe the men, and assume other responsibilities. The Church was responsible for the spiritual welfare of the men and many ministers have frequently visited the camps to conduct service. Since 1900 there have been usually about five hundred men in forestry service.

Several distinct church bodies which were closely related to the M. B. Church sprang up in the Mennonite colonies since 1860.

In 1869 Jacob A. Wiebe founded the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church, which consisted mainly of members coming out of the "Kleine Gemeinde." This whole church body emigrated to America, 1874-1875. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church began in the Molotschna in 1905. It was composed of such members from various Mennonite Church bodies who sought for a deeper spiritual life and more fellowship, and who wished an Alliance type of church. They gave recognition to the several forms of baptismal practices and regarded the Scriptures as their guide for doctrine and practice. The Evangelical M. B. Church has been in a close relationship with the M. B. Church, especially since 1914.

5. Foreign Mission Work of the Russian M. B. Church. 1889-1914

The Mennonite Brethren Church has been a mission-minded church from its beginning. It was born in an atmosphere of mission festivals and of missionary zeal. During the first three decades its mission activities were mainly confined to home missions and these were largely among Mennonite circles. The M. B. Church would have undertaken definite mission work among the Russians, had not the government prohibited them from doing so. Even in spite of the rigid restrictions on religious propaganda among Russians, some of the Brethren bore their witness to them and led a number of Russians to a saving knowledge through faith in Christ. A number of the Brethren suffered imprisonment because of such ministry.

The desire to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the many millions in heathen lands was kindled in the hearts of leading brethren and became the burden of their prayers. This keen interest in foreign missions was brought about by reading of foreign mission work in the various fields of the world. Such literature came into their hands from evangelical sources in Germany. Many began to contribute for such missions and to send their gifts to headquarters of these societies.

In 1885 a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Friesen, was found, who felt the Lord's call to go forth as missionaries to a foreign field. They went to Hamburg, Germany, and there attended the Baptist Theological Seminary in order to prepare for foreign mission work. When they neared the completion of their studies in 1888, Mr. Friesen began to correspond with leading elders of the church, expressing their desire to go to a foreign land as missionaries of the M. B. Church. He suggested that since their church

was small, they affiliate themselves with some evangelical mission, kindred in faith and practice of baptism.

The leading brethren approved Friesen's suggestion and rejoiced over the willingness of the young couple to go out as missionaries. The M. B. Conference approved the plan and agreed to send Mr. and Mrs. Friesen as their missionaries and to support them.

Mr. Friesen had been reading many of the reports of the American Baptist Missionary Union, especially of the work their mission-



Abr. Friesen

aries were doing among the Telugus in southern India. A report about the open and needy field at Nalgonda in the Hyderabad State impressed him very strongly, and when he read the appeal for a missionary to this field, his heart was drawn there. He corresponded with the society and an arrangement could be made which seemed to be satisfactory to the Baptist Missionary Union, to the M. B. Church, and also to the missionaries. According to this plan the M. B. Church would affiliate itself with the Union by taking over a field, sending missionaries to it and supporting them and the

evangelistic work. The Union would procure and own the stations and institutions and conduct the schools and hospitals.

In the fall of 1889 Mr. and Mrs. Friesen went to India and after a year of language study settled down at Nalgonda. Here they erected a mission station. Nalgonda, a district center, is located in the Telugu language area in the southeastern part of the Hyderabad State. The missionaries took over a mission field for the Russian M. B. Church, having an area of 6000 square miles and a population of 700,000 inhabitants.

Baptist missionaries had toured the field before this and found it responsive to the Gospel and had baptized a number of converts. The Friesens found this field white and ready for harvest. On January 4, 1891, they organized the Telugu Christians into an indigenous church of 129 members. That year Mr. Friesen was privileged to baptize 178 new converts and the following year 109. When they left for their first furlough in the spring of 1897, the Friesens had the joy of reporting an indigenous church numbering 700 members.

In the course of time the mission prospered and expanded remarkably. Additional missionaries entered the work and were added to the staff. Mr. and Mrs. Abr. J. Huebert, who went out in 1898, opened the Sooriapet station, thirty five miles east of Nalgonda in 1900. Here they did a very successful work in a large and responsive field for thirty five years. Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Unruh, who arrived on the field in 1899, began the Jangaon Station, forty five miles north of Nalgonda in 1902. Mr. and Mrs. John G. Wiens, who came to India in 1904 were called to Rampatnam, where Mr. Wiens served as teacher in the Baptist Theological Seminary. Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius H. Unruh, who arrived in 1904, became the successors of the Friesens at Nalgonda, where they labored many years. Other missionaries who have likewise worked in the mission, are: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wiens, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Penner, the latter being still in India, and the four single sisters, Katharina Reimer, Anna Epp, Anna Peters, and Agnes Neufeld.

The missionaries from the Mennonite Brethren in Russia concentrated on direct evangelism in their mission efforts and the Lord wonderfully blessed the work. Many among the Telugus were led to an experience of salvation when they heard the "word of the cross." In December, 1910, the total membership of the indigenous church on the field was 3,000.

The relationship between the Brethren and the Baptist Mission proved to be satisfactory. With the outbreak of World War I in

1914, the M. B. Church in Russia was cut off entirely from India and their further financial support of the mission became impossible. The Baptist Mission, thereupon, assumed full responsibility for the support of the missionaries and amalgamated the work with theirs. The missionaries at that time on the field were the A. J. Hueberts, the C. H. Unruhs, the J. A. Penners, and Agnes Neufeld. They continued in the work and joined the Baptist church as members.

6. The M. B. Church in Russia Since 1914

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, a new and grave situation presented itself to the M. B. Church as well as to all the Mennonites in Russia. Though their young men were not called up for combatant military service, nearly all of them were engaged either in the nation's forestry department, in the army medical and hospital service, or in some other service. About 12,000 men were constantly engaged in this way and their support was entirely borne by the colonies. The severe anti-German feeling in the land and the suspicion that the Mennonites might be German sympathizers, made it very difficult for the colonies. Their church services had thus far been conducted in the German language, but this was now forbidden in many places.

When in February, 1917, the Czar's government broke down and the socialistic Kerensky came to power and signed the armistice, many hoped that better conditions would set in, but this was not the case. At this time the Mennonites organized themselves into a Mennonite Congress for the purpose of furthering their cause through united action. A deputation also visited America to investigate the possibility and advisability of a mass immigration. This was, however, impossible at that time.

The fall of the Kerensky government in October, 1917, and the coming to power of the Bolsheviks and the ensuing long struggle between the Red and the White armies, meant for the Mennonites in southern Russia a three year period of indescribable terror and sufferings. The Red and White armies fought back and forth across the Ukraine and took live-stock, food supplies, and other things at will. In the interim, hordes of outlaws, made up of the discontented and the criminal class, passed through the country, plundering, raping, and killing where they came. The worst of all these marauders was one Machno, who at times had as many as 40,000 such outlaws in his army. He held sway in the Ukraine during the winter of 1919-1920. The trail of atrocities, murder, and destruction, which

these bandits left behind, defies description. Some of the Mennonites at last organized and armed themselves for protection and self-defence, in what they called the "Selbstschutz." They joined with the Lutherans and for some time stood up against these plundering bands. They were, however, finally overcome and the lot of the Mennonites was worse than before. Along with this state of chaos came epidemics: spotted typhus and cholera. Since there was a lack of proper food and of medical supplies and care, these diseases swept away thousands of people.

After the three years of this horrible civil war and epidemics, famine set in, beginning in a severe form in 1921. The famine was partly due to drought and crop failures, but largely because of the devastation and anarchy in the land. This was the worst of famine in Russian history and several millions of people died of starvation. It was at this time that Mennonites in North America, Holland, and Germany came to the help of their brethren in Russia and carried out an extensive program of relief work, which was continued for a number of years and became the means of saving the lives of many.

During this time of hardships the M. B. Church continued its meetings and to bear its witness wherever possible. The most encouraging fact is that during this time of calamities, a sweeping revival took place, where hundreds sought the Lord and were saved. In many localities they had baptismal services larger than ever before. In spite of the hardships the leading brethren did not lose courage but were determined to do the Lord's work with zeal. A Bible School for the training of Christian workers was begun at this time by A. H. Unruh and J. G. Wiens in the Crimea. When circumstances compelled them to discontinue at one place, they shifted with the school to another locality. The school, therefore, was sometimes named: "Wandernde Bibelschule." Before the Bolshevik regime was well established, there was comparative religious liberty for about two years, where preaching among Russians was not restricted. A number of the Brethren during that time preached the Gospel of Christ to the Russians and many of them were saved.

It became apparent to many that the future was doomed for the Mennonites in Russia and that another trek to another country must be made. Since the immigration laws for entering the U. S. A. made it impossible to go there and since the doors into Canada were open, an emigration to Canada on a large scale began in 1923 and continued until 1930. Over 21,000 Mennonites migrated from Russia to Canada at that time. B. B. Janz, a minister in the M. B. Church, rendered most valuable service to many in assisting them.

to get the required passports for leaving Russia. The obtaining of passports became more difficult right along and finally was impossible. The Canadian Pacific Railroad undertook the transportation of these Mennonites to Canada, taking most of them across on credit.

In the summer of 1929 news spread throughout the Mennonite settlements in Russia and Siberia that passports were again available for those wishing to migrate. Many disposed of the belongings they still had and proceeded to Moscow with the hope of obtaining passports in order to escape from Russia. In this way about 10,000 had gathered on the outskirts of Moscow by November, waiting for much desired passports. Since they failed to get the required permission to leave, very acute suffering and want began to be felt. Through the mediation of the German government and of relief agencies, about 4,000 of them were enabled to leave the country. The rest were forced to return to South Russia or to Siberia or were sent to some other parts of the country. The cruel way in which they were transported added to their agony and sufferings. They were crowded into box-cars without heating or sanitary provisions. Then these cars were sealed and the people were transported to destinations they knew not of. No food was provided them and a very limited supply of water was given. Some died on the way and the corpses were thrown out, babies were born, and families were torn asunder, some members being sent to one place and others to another. Those who returned to their former villages were without home or shelter or food and had the suspicion of harsh officials resting upon them. The vast majority of those who managed to leave Russia went to Paraguay and Brazil.

During the time when the obtaining of passports was impossible many of the Mennonites fled into China and a small number also into Chinese Turkestan. A group of over 600 gathered at Harbin and lived there for some time in poverty and want. Of these, 200 were permitted to enter the U. S. A. in the spring of 1930. Of the others, 373 went to Paraguay in 1932, and the remaining 180 were enabled to go to Brazil two years later.

After the population of the Russian Mennonites had been reduced through war, revolution, pestilence, famine, and the extensive migrations, there still remained not less than 60,000. Of their fate under the Soviet regime since 1930, very little was known for a long time. During World War II, when the Germans began to retreat in Russia, many left and fled into Central Europe. After the close of the war about 10,000 of these were gathered into relief

camps and cared for. Over 8,000 of these unfortunate ones have since been helped to establish new homes in South America or in Canada. The Mennonite Central Committee, on which are represented the various Mennonite bodies in North America, has done a very extensive and highly valuable work in alleviating the suffering during the time of famine by providing food and clothing to many, and also during the migrations, by arranging for their transportation and by assisting them in the establishing of their homes in the new country.

One can hardly speak of a Mennonite Brethren Church existing in Russia after 1930, though there were true and faithful believers in many places. After the first World War the differences between the several Mennonite Churches lost in importance. Their common dangers, needs, and sufferings drew them closer together. Especially were those of kindred minds, who had a living faith in Christ and a strong hold on Him, drawn closely together.

Why calamity after calamity befell God's people in that land where they and their forefathers formerly prospered so wonderfully one cannot understand. We know that God, who overrules, moves in mysterious ways, and that He ultimately makes all things well. We have seen that many of those who have passed through this furnace of affliction have become very useful servants of their Lord in their new homes. Furthermore, this situation gave to God's children among Mennonites not so afflicted the opportunity to help their brethren in their sufferings and to manifest the spirit of Jesus.

PART II

The Mennonite Brethren Church in North America

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNING OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA 1874-1888

In the preceding chapters we have briefly treated the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia. We have considered its background, its beginning, its growth and expansion, its position and the development of its doctrine, its progress in various activities, and its discontinuation under the calamities of recent times. A knowledge of this history is necessary in order to understand the historical course of the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America.

North America is the scene where the M. B. Church has had its greatest expansion and its largest numerical increase, where it has carried out its most important activities, and where it has made its most valuable contributions toward Mennonite history, as well as to the whole Church of Christ. In chapters IV to XII we shall, therefore, deal with the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America.

Chapter IV presents the beginning of the M. B. Church in America from 1874, when the first members arrived, until 1888, the year for which we have the first statistics on hand. It is the period where the church established itself in the new home.

1. Migration of the Russian Mennonites to America and Their Settlement

When it became known to the Mennonites in Russia that their government was instituting universal military service and that their young men would not be exempt from it, or at least not from similar obligations after 1880, many became aroused. They at once began to think of migrating to a new home, where they would have religious freedom and exemption from any services that were

against their conscience. The United States and Canada seemed to offer to them such a haven of refuge.

In 1873 the Mennonites sent twelve men to America to investigate matters. They found conditions very favorable: the religious freedom, where all churches and sects had full liberty and could propagate their faith unmolested, appealed to them. There was no compulsory military service in the U. S. A., and the probability of instituting it was very remote, while the Canadian government gave them the assurance that Mennonites would be exempt from any such service in their land. The vast open prairies of the Middle West offered many suitable localities for settlements. The Mennonites, who had come to this continent earlier and lived in the eastern and central states, were friendly and ready to assist them.

The twelve men returned to Russia and reported favorably of the conditions they had found in America and of the prospects for making settlements there. Immediately a strong sentiment for emigrating to America developed. In July, 1874, the first large party left Russia and arrived in New York in August. They went West, most of them to Kansas and Nebraska, where they temporarily remained in barracks in Topeka and Lincoln until they were able to procure suitable land for settling.

The stream of immigration increased. In 1875 several large groups arrived and again in 1876. Sometimes whole shiploads with over 700 would come at a time. After 1876, smaller groups continued to come and also isolated families. It is estimated that during the decade beginning in 1874 about 18,000 Mennonites migrated from Europe to America. Most of these were from South Russia, but some of them came from Russian Poland and from Prussia. Of these 18,000 about 10,000 settled in the U. S. A. and 8,000 in Canada. Those coming from the Molotschna Colony nearly all located in the U. S. A., while those coming from the Chortiza colony and daughter colonies, settled mostly in Manitoba, Canada.

When these emigrations of Mennonites from Russia took place the wealthier families as a rule preferred to remain in Russia and to adjust themselves to the changing conditions. Of those leaving, many had some land and other property which they were able to sell, so that they had some capital to purchase land and establish their homes in America. Many had very limited means and some had none. The majority had to begin in dire poverty. At this time Mennonites in the east offered valuable assistance to the most needy ones.

Of those coming to the U. S. A. about half of them settled in Kansas, mainly in the counties Marion, Harvey, and Reno. Those going to Nebraska made their largest settlement in York and Hamilton counties. In Minnesota they located in Cottonwood county in the southwestern part of the state. Those settling in South Dakota found the place for their homes north of Yankton in the southeastern part of the state. In Canada large reservations, totalling about twenty six townships along the Red River south of Winnipeg, were settled by Mennonites. Most of these received their land as homesteads.

At that time several large railroad companies owned much land in the Middle West which was still unsettled. They were eager to have the Mennonites come and settle here and so they sold their land to them for two to three dollars an acre and on easy terms. Many purchased from the railroad companies; the Santa Fe Railway Co., especially, sold much land to the Mennonites. Others purchased theirs from large real estate companies, from private owners, or from the government.

For these pioneers it meant to begin life anew in a strange country; to build a home, to break the sod and sow in hope, to toil from early till late and earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, to be content with little, and to keep up courage in the face of hardships. As a rule these settlers were fortunate in securing the best farmland in the Middle West. Though they were an agricultural people, they had to learn much. At first they adhered largely to the methods of farming they were accustomed to, but soon they adopted American methods. Some of them had brought along wagons, farm implements, and even threshing stones and used these at first. In Kansas some of them settled in villages. This they found to be impractical and so they moved on their own land and established their farm-yards. In Manitoba they all settled in villages and continued to live this way for many years, and some of them still adhere to this arrangement.

With diligence and thrift and God's blessing resting upon them, many succeeded and became prosperous farmers. Attractive homes replaced the sod house or primitive shack of pioneer days. Large barns were built, and imposing farm-yards with orchards and vegetable gardens became common in their communities. In Kansas they introduced the red winter wheat, which they were used to growing in Europe, and this became the common variety in the state. After two decades they had transformed many sections of our country into some of the finest farm communities.

These Mennonites had come to America on account of religious scruples, and they, like their forefathers, continued to hold their spiritual heritage dear. Where they set foot they immediately began with their worship services. At first they met in their homes; then, as soon as a school building became available, they used it for their Sunday services; and after a congregation materialized, they built a church.

Upon settling in America they established their churches and made their affiliations very much along the lines that they were used to from Russia. Those who in Russia belonged to the regular Mennonite Church largely united with the General Conference of Mennonites. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church, which had come over completely, settled in Marion and McPherson counties and continued as a separate conference. Those known as the Peter's church in Nebraska and the Bruderthaler in Minnesota united and formed the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church. In Canada they organized themselves into several distinct bodies as Bergthaler Church, Sommerfelder, Rudnerweider, Old Colony Mennonites, and Kleine Gemeinde. Where members of the Mennonite Brethren Church settled, they united and organized themselves into churches.

2. The Mennonite Brethren Among These Settlements

Among these Mennonite settlements in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and South Dakota, were scattered here and there families of the Mennonite Brethren Church, the larger number being those in Kansas. Very few of these came with the first groups. Probably the majority came in 1876 or later. The total number coming between 1874 and 1880 may have been two hundred families. The majority of these came from the Molotschna and the Kuban areas, but there was also a fair percentage from the Volga settlements and some from the Chortiza colony and from the Don.

Where the Mennonite Brethren settled, they at once felt the need for the nurture of their spiritual life and for Christian fellowship. They had parted from their home churches in Russia and were now scattered and few in number. The reading of God's Word and prayer in the family circle, which had always held an important place in their homes, now became more precious than ever. Wherever several families lived in a community they came together on Sundays and had worship services in one of the homes.

As soon as more of the brethren settled in a community, they united and organized themselves into a church congregation, and

held their meetings in one of the homes of the members or in a school house, or, where it became possible, they erected a plain church building, and met in it. The gathering of God's children meant very much to them and they were willing to sacrifice in order to make this possible. Some walked to church service a long distance; some went with horses and wagon six to ten miles regularly every Sunday. There were a few ministers among their number during the first years and the ablest of the brethren led the meeting as well as they could.



Abr. Schellenberg

3. The Mennonite Brethren in Kansas

a. *Ebenezer Church.* In the area where the counties Harvey, Reno, and McPherson meet, a number of M. B. families settled as early as 1874. It was, however, in 1878 when through a revival others joined them and they organized themselves into a church. Peter Wall and Franz Ediger were elected to lead the church and to minister the Word. In the summer of 1879 elder Abraham Schellenberg and twelve other members of the M. B. Church arrived and settled in this community and united with them. Abr. Schellenberg was now chosen elder and the brethren Wall and Ediger as ministers to assist him.

Several revivals followed and new converts were added to the church through baptism, so that in 1884 the congregation numbered 150 members. In 1880 a church was built for which purpose

the mother church, Rueckenau in the Molotschna, sent a contribution of 200 Rubles. At this time, when several different Mennonite congregations were in the making in this community, occasional friction was unavoidable. It was, however, possible for the M. B. Church to develop in a comparatively peaceful way and to respect the neighboring churches. The Ebenezer church almost at the beginning decided to hold the same position in doctrine and practice that the M. B. Church in Russia had held. This congregation has for many years been one of the largest and one of the most influential of the M. B. Churches. Mission and harvest festivals were here instituted early, and were attended by many and became a great blessing to other churches.

b. *Ebenfeld Church.* Two families of the M. B. Church settled in the community southeast of Hillsboro, Marion county, Kansas, in 1875. They at first attended the K. M. B. Church of Gnadenau, nearby. A few months later Peter Eckert, an M. B. minister from the Volga settlement in Russia, arrived with a number of other members from there. The following year seventy five families arrived, some from the Kuban, others from Chortiza, but the majority from the Volga. These joined with the earlier ones and they formed the Ebenfeld M. B. Church with Eckert as presiding minister. In 1879 several families arrived coming from the Don settlement in Russia, including Abraham Cornelsen, and in 1883 still more followed, among whom was Johann Foth. These all united with the Ebenfeld Church. During the first years serious efforts were made to unite with the K. M. B. congregation and to form one church. At one time the amalgamation was nearly completed. The two, however, separated and each developed its own local church.

The Ebenfeld congregation grew and added many through baptisms; fifty in the spring of 1877, and smaller groups the following years. This church, composed of so many elements, coming from various parts of Russia, found it difficult to grow into one united church, and much friction had to be overcome during the early years. The brethren from the Volga, especially, brought some peculiar views and practices, which they were reluctant to leave and which the others felt they could not accept.

When Peter Eckert found it difficult to lead the congregation, Abr. Cornelsen was chosen to be his assistant and a short time later, his successor. Cornelsen served the church as elder until 1884, when he died and Johann Foth became his successor. In 1883 the congregation built a spacious house of worship and in the following

year enlarged it. The congregation continued to grow, numbering 253 members in 1888, and has ever since been a large one.

The Ebenfeld church had several other difficulties to encounter in its early years. In 1878 Eduard Leppke, who had been an active itinerating minister in Russia, immigrated and settled in this community. He sought to draw members from the congregation and to form his own. In this he succeeded with only a few, and these later returned. After that Leppke united with the K. M. B. Church, but soon left them and joined the Seventh Day Adventists. Peter Gaede, who arrived in 1879, sought to gain influence. He won over some of the members and later he too joined the Adventist Church; a number of those, coming originally from the Volga, followed him. A traveling Baptist minister, Janicka, likewise came



Cornelius Wedel

into this community and regarded it as a field where he should win those of the M. B. Church over to the Baptists. He succeeded in winning a number of those members coming from the Volga over to his church. In the course of time the element coming from the Volga dwindled away, some joining other churches, others moving into other localities.

c. *Other M. B. Churches in Marion County, Kansas.* Several other M. B. Churches began in Marion County, which played a definite part in the early history of the M. B. Church. In 1880 a number of people were converted in the Alexanderwohl community near Goessel, in the southwestern part of the county. They began

to assemble for prayer and edification, and in the fall of the same year they invited elder Schellenberg to come and baptize them and to assist them in organizing as a church. Cornelius Wedel was elected presiding minister and later ordained elder. After the congregation had increased some more in membership, they built a church in Goessel.

Several families of the M. B. Church settled near Lehigh and began with services in their homes about 1800. When the church at Goessel was organized, the group at Lehigh formed a branch station of it and elder Wedel had charge of it. In 1884 the Lehigh congregation built a church and called David Dyck of Woodson county to come and be their minister. This church increased and soon numbered 75 members. A smaller group began to assemble ten miles north of Lehigh, holding its meetings in a school house not far from Durham. This group, however, did not develop into an organized congregation and has since discontinued.

The Johannestal congregation, later known as the Hillsboro M. B. Church, began among Mennonites who came from Russian Poland and settled at French Creek, north of Hillsboro. A revival broke out and spread in this community in 1880. Those who were converted assembled for prayer-meetings where others also found peace through faith in Christ. At Easter time in 1881, Abr. Schellenberg was called, and he baptized the first converts on that day. A week later twenty four more were baptized. A local church was organized with John Harms as presiding minister. A private school house in Hillsboro was soon procured for holding the meetings and shortly after that a church was built. The Hillsboro Church numbered 100 members in 1888.

Some M. B. Church members coming from the Volga, settled near Marion and began meetings in a school house a short distance west of the town. Jacob Ehrlich served them as minister. Of this congregation the majority joined the Baptists in 1879-1880, and some went over to the Adventist Church. In 1895 Ehrlich and the remaining members also joined the Baptists. This congregation was noted for the mission festivals held every year at Pentecost, which proved to be a blessing to many.

d. *The M. B. Church in Woodson County, Kansas.* In 1877 twenty families of the M. B. Church coming from the Chortiza colony settled in Woodson County, one hundred miles east of Marion county. In 1878 the Lord graciously sent them a revival where nearly all the young people of the community were converted. After Abr. Neufeld had served this church as minister a short time,

Bernard Pauls was elected as presiding minister and David Dyck to assist him. Meetings were held in a school house. With further additions through baptism the church gradually increased. In 1884 David Dyck moved to Lehigh as did Bernard Pauls a year later. The church then elected Cornelius Nickel and Peter Nickel to the ministry, and it continued for some time. In 1888 it numbered 52 members. Later all the members moved to other localities. This small congregation was especially noted for its zealous support of home and foreign missions.

4. The Mennonite Brethren in Nebraska

A strong and influential M. B. congregation developed in the large settlement of York and Hamilton counties, Nebraska, near



Joh. J. Regier

the town of Henderson. It began with three members settling here in 1876. Soon others came from Russia and there were frequent conversions and baptisms so that a congregation of 120 members had grown up by 1880. Peter Regier served as the first minister. He was succeeded in 1882 by his brother, Johann J. Regier, who served the church as elder for many years. In 1880 the congregation built its first house of worship which was in 1887 replaced by a larger one. The membership continued to increase through frequent revivals and baptisms, numbering 226 members in 1888. Extension work done at Sutton, sixteen miles south of Henderson, led to a revival there and later to the beginning of a congregation

of Volga brethren. The first three General Conferences were held in the Henderson Church and it has since remained the leading M. B. congregation in Nebraska.

Another congregation began in Boone County 85 miles north of Henderson. In 1879 Johann J. Regier and others of the M. B. Church settled here and this led to its beginning. It was affiliated with the Henderson Church and when Elder Regier moved to Henderson in 1882, Isaac Wall was chosen to be its minister. He served the congregation until 1899 when he moved to Janzen, Nebraska. Other families left shortly after this, the church building was sold, and the congregation discontinued.

An M. B. congregation, which in 1887 numbered 50 members coming from the Volga brethren, began at Culbertson, southwestern Nebraska in 1879. This church was under the leadership of Valentin Reiber in its early years. A large part of the congregation went over to the Seventh Day Adventists, hence the M. B. congregation has remained small.

5. The Mennonite Brethren in Minnesota

A large group of Russian Mennonites settled in Cottonwood County, Minnesota. Among those who came over in 1875 and 1876 were eleven members of the M. B. Church. These began meetings in their homes, and when others were converted and baptized and when still more of the Brethren came from Russia, their number increased to a fair-sized congregation. In July, 1877, the group elected its first two ministers: Heinrich Voth, who became leader, and Johann Wiens, who was his assistant. Later Voth was elected and ordained elder and served the church in this capacity until 1918. The congregation built a church north of Bingham Lake and was until recently called by this name.

Since the congregation was rather scattered, having many members living far south, a second place of worship was built southeast of Bingham Lake which was known as the "South Church." The two, however, continued to be one duly organized local church and had their monthly or quarterly meetings together. When, toward the close of the century, most of the members to the south moved to Saskatchewan, meetings here discontinued, and since a group of members had begun to gather in Mountain Lake, the southern church building was moved into this town.

The M. B. Church in Minnesota numbered 107 members in 1884, but that year forty members left them and moved to Kansas.

After that the number of members again increased and for a long time this congregation was one of the largest in the M. B. Conference. A commendable innovation of this church was the holding of their Fourth of July Mission Festival, since 1887. The object was to offer to their young people and to the community something better than the celebrations held in the surrounding towns and to further interest in missions.

6. The Mennonite Brethren in South Dakota

Several members of the M. B. Church were included in the settlement of Mennonites in Turner County, southeastern South Dakota. In 1876 these began to congregate and hold their meetings in homes. After more had come into the settlement and others had been added through baptism, a church was organized in 1878 with Heinrich Adrian as presiding minister, who in 1881 was ordained elder. Adrian served this church and community as elder until 1904, when he moved to Kansas.

This community for some time offered a large and responsive mission field. Bruderfeld, near Parker, was the main station. Affiliated branch stations where separate meetings were held, were Wittenberg, Rosenfeld, and Emanuel's Creek. After a short time of growth and prosperity, some internal difficulties arose within the church and thirty one members left and joined the Seventh Day Adventists. The church again survived this loss and increased through further conversions. In 1886, however, over half of the membership, 79 in number, left them and also joined the Adventists. This was a severe blow to the church, yet the Lord did not forsake His own. New members were again added through baptisms, so that in 1888 it numbered 80 members. The center of this congregation has since shifted further west to Silver Lake, where the present church building is located.

7. The Uniting of the Mennonite Brethren Into a Church Conference

The foregoing four sections have shown how M. B. churches began and grew in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and South Dakota, how they met and overcame difficulties arising within, and how they encountered adverse teachings and influences coming from without. The Lord graciously kept watch over His own and in spite of weaknesses and failures on the part of the church, He led them on to victory.

A desire for a closer relationship among the several congregations manifested itself from the beginning, and there was some fellowship with one another. This was largely brought about by the ministers of the larger congregations when they visited the smaller places and had preaching services there. The struggle in establishing their homes and of making a living, as well as the lack of facilities of communication, made much intercourse with brethren farther away impossible.

In 1878 a meeting was called in Nebraska for the purpose of uniting the congregations into a conference. This was attended by four representatives from Kansas and seven from Nebraska. A number of points of common interest were discussed and several resolutions were passed. This meeting was later not recognized as a properly constituted Conference of the M. B. Church, because the congregations were not properly represented and because the position taken on several points did not receive general acceptance. It, however, was a step that led the way toward an organized Conference of the M. B. Church.

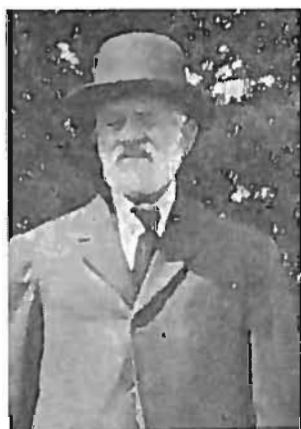
The first duly constituted, and by the churches generally recognized, M. B. Conference convened with the congregation of York and Hamilton County, Nebraska, October 18-20, 1879. It was begun with a love feast and a mission festival on Sunday, followed by two days of business deliberations. The congregations in Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota were represented with twenty-two delegates. In addition to these a number of visitors were present, including some from South Dakota. Johann J. Regier served as chairman and four brethren did the secretarial work. Points of common interest were discussed, especially matters relating to home missions in the churches and the supervision of the contributions for the same. The matter of ordination of ministers and questions pertaining to church discipline were also discussed.

The M. B. Conference has convened annually from 1879 until 1909, when the church was divided into District Conferences and provision was made to meet for the General Conference only once in three years. The purpose in organizing the church as a Conference appears to have been: to provide spiritual fellowship among the churches, to take a united position on points of doctrine and practice, and to carry out more effectively the various activities which the churches have in common.

The time for the Conference was always in fall and was arranged so that it included a festival Sunday. This Sunday was devoted to messages on Home and Foreign Missions, or topics of

special importance to the churches. Special mission offerings were taken on this day. The evenings were devoted to evangelistic services or to addresses on some Biblical subjects. Communion Service was observed at some convenient time, and a very brotherly spirit has generally prevailed. In the business sessions various points of common concern were discussed, the activities the churches had in common were surveyed, and the required provisions for carrying on all the work were made.

The Lord has graciously blessed the M. B. Church with a number of strong and highly spiritual leaders. They have, by the grace of God, done much to establish the Church, to build it up in its spiritual life, to keep it true to her Lord, and to launch it forth into various Christian activities. Abraham Schellenberg, who



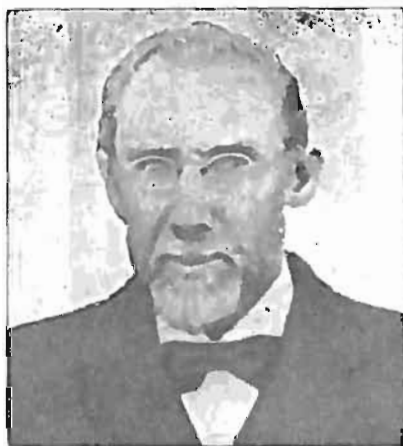
Johann Foth

presided at conferences on eighteen occasions, travelled extensively among the churches and wielded a strong influence in the various activities of the Conference. The elders Cornelius Wedel, Johann Foth, and David Dyck in Kansas, have likewise traveled extensively and have taken a leading part in the conference activities. In Nebraska Johann J. Regier became an outstanding leader and did a blessed work by visiting the smaller places of that state and establishing the believers. Heinrich Voth of Minnesota has in early years traveled much in the spiritual interests of the church and has become a great blessing through this work. He was later frequently elected to preside at the conferences. Heinrich Adrian did a valuable work among the several small stations in South Dakota.

8. Early Conference Activities of the M. B. Church

Among the activities the Conference undertook in early years was the Home Mission work, which engaged its chief attention. This work was arranged for by the Conference: the workers were selected, the place of work was assigned to each, and the provision was made for remuneration and traveling expenses. The contributions for this purpose came from the churches and were liberal when compared with the size of the church and the limited means of the members. A committee was soon elected by the Conference which directed and supervised the work.

The early home mission work consisted mainly in an itinerating ministry by which various ministerial brethren, gifted for this purpose, would travel from church to church during the winter



Heinrich Adrian

months and hold prolonged meetings. Sometimes these meetings were aimed at strengthening and building up the spiritual life of the church, often they took on the form of evangelistic services, which led to revivals and the conversion of the unsaved.

There was a great need for home mission work at that time and there were splendid opportunities for extension work. Where new and small stations existed and where these conference workers found open doors, they went and conducted meetings. Such places were numerous and souls hungering for the Word of Life were found in many places.

Manitoba in Canada was the first field taken over by the Conference as its field for extension work. Among the conservatively minded Mennonites of southern Manitoba there were many who were longing for more light and so the conference began to send evangelistic workers there as early as 1883. Heinrich Voth and David Dyck did pioneer service here. It was in 1886 when the first converts were baptized. This baptism in Manitoba marks the beginning of the M. B. Church in Canada. This was a great encouragement to the Conference and it was decided to continue the work and to station David Dyck there as full time worker. The plan, however, could not be carried out at that time, and since Gerhard Wiebe, a minister from Russia, had come and settled there, he was for a number of years assigned to work in Manitoba and supported as part-time worker of the Conference. The aggressive home mission efforts of the early years largely account for the rapid growth of the M. B. Church at that time.

Interest in Foreign Missions manifested itself in the M. B. Church from the beginning, and a desire to participate in this work soon made itself felt at Conferences. The first recorded reference to it is in the Conference report for 1881, when it was agreed to send one half of the Sunday mission offering, \$26.36 for foreign missions.

A letter from G. N. Thompson, a Baptist missionary to the Telugus in India, was read at the 1884 Conference. In this letter he invited the M. B. Conference to participate in the work on this field and support an indigenous worker with one hundred dollars annually. Thompson was known in M. B. Circles, and the Conference agreed to participate in the work and to contribute the mentioned hundred dollars, and the following year it decided to support two workers..

A mission board of eight members was appointed at the 1885 Conference, with Cornelius Wedel as chairman. This Board had charge of collecting money for foreign missions, remitting the same, and looking after matters pertaining to foreign missions. The work begun in India was for some time continued, and since there was a surplus in the treasury, the 1887 Conference decided to support also a native preacher in Kameroon, Africa. A burning desire to have its own foreign mission begin to manifest itself in the Conference at this time and the leading brethren looked forward to the time when they would be able to send out their own workers and begin their own foreign mission work.

The first step toward publication work in the M. B. Church was taken at the 1883 Conference, when Bernhard Pauls was ap-

pointed to collect written reports of the work done by the evangelists, and if possible, publish a small church paper or have these reports printed in some other church paper. A further step was taken when the 1884 Conference elected a committee of three to arrange for the printing of the Conference report and the publication of a church paper. As a result of this decision the "Zionsbote" was published at the beginning of the year 1885, as a quarterly. Since this met with the general approval of the Church, it appeared as a monthly periodical the following year and as a weekly paper after 1889. The "Zionsbote" was at first printed at the Mennonite Publishing House, Elkhart, Indiana, then for some time at McPherson, Kansas, a short time at Hillsboro, Kansas, and after that for a number of years at Medford, Oklahoma. J. F. Harms was the first editor and continued in this work until 1906. He can truly be regarded as the pioneer in the publication work of the M. B. Church.

The need of providing education for the young people of the church and of having a church-school, was voiced first at the 1883 Conference. No steps toward establishing an M. B. Conference School could be taken at that time. The importance and the need of it was at that time understood by a few, but not generally. The educational problem, as it confronted the M. B. Church here in America, was also of a peculiar type: the public schools offered secular education in the English language; the language spoken in the homes was in most cases a Low German dialect; the church services were conducted in the German language. The constituency in general wished to retain the German, and, therefore, had short terms of German school wherever possible, and included also some Biblical instruction. This circumstance called for teachers qualified to teach German and Bible. The need for training teachers for this purpose as well as the need of preparing church workers and mission workers, was therefore, the educational problem, that stood before the M. B. Church.

In 1884 J. F. Harms began a private school at Canada, Kansas, which provided elementary instruction in German, English, and Bible, which he continued two years. A school Association, "Schulverein," then took over the school and enabled Mr. Harms to continue it at Lehigh, Kansas, two years longer. This school, though not begun or financially supported by the M. B. Conference, may be regarded as the first Mennonite Brethren School in America and J. F. Harms as the pioneer educator of the M. B. Church. A

number of outstanding Conference workers came from the students attending this school.

The only statistics of the M. B. Church available for this period are those that have been published in "Zionsbote" No. 2, 1888, and are quoted by P. M. Friesen. These give the following figures: Churches and meeting places—18; total church membership, 1,266; elders—7; ordained ministers and deacons—29; unordained ministers and deacons—23.

CHAPTER V

THE M. B. CHURCH AND ITS ACTIVITIES AS A CONFERENCE 1888-1909

The twenty-one years of M. B. Church history, beginning in 1888 and terminating with 1909 when it was subdivided into District Conferences, may be described as a period rich in blessings of frequent revivals and numerous conversions, of rapid expansion and growth, of constant increase in activities and of launching forth on new enterprises.

Some of the problems and difficulties that confronted the Church during its initial stages had been successfully met and solved. When strange teachings like that of Seventh Day Adventism made inroads on the church and swept away some of its members, the Lord graciously protected and kept His flock, so that no very serious results followed. Since then the M. B. Church has maintained a firm position against this teaching. In relation to the surrounding church bodies, the Brethren learned to show a brotherly spirit and to cooperate with others where this contributed toward the mutual welfare. The Church, having become established, now found that the Lord wonderfully opened new doors of opportunity for greater service and graciously granted effective workers for the various fields of activity.

1. Growth of the Church and Its Spread Into New Settlements

The early M. B. Congregations, mentioned in the preceeding chapter, nearly all grew and prospered. As functioning local churches they became more fully established: the Sunday morning worship service included congregational singing, a prayer season, one or two sermons, and in the larger churches also special songs by a choir. Sunday Schools had become generally established and were usually conducted on Sunday afternoon. In many of the churches the "Jugendverein" had been organized and offered valuable opportunities for the young people. All services were conducted in the German language. The number of ministers increased and among them were found some brethren with clear

insight into the truths of God's Word and the gift of powerfully proclaiming the work.

What is to be noted most about this period is the rapid advance of the church, its spread to new areas and the beginning of numerous new congregations. This was partly the result of M. B. families moving out of the older settlements into newer ones and there establishing congregations, but it can also be largely attributed to the aggressive home mission effort of this time. A number of families also immigrated from Russia during these years and joined the existing congregations.

The mission efforts in Manitoba since 1884 bore fruit and led to the organization of an M. B. Church at Winkler, in 1888, the first in Canada. A Mennonite settlement, among which also Mennonite Brethren were included, began in the area west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, in 1892. Here the groups of the Brethren were small for a number of years, but began to increase more rapidly toward the close of the nineteenth century. The churches Laird, Bruderfeld, Hepburn, Dalmeny, Borden, Neu Hoffnung, Waldheim, and Aberdeen began in this area. A circuit of M. B. Churches began to develop in southern Saskatchewan in the Herbert area in 1905. Here, in the course of several years, the congregations Herbert, Main Centre, Greenfarm, Bethania, Ebenezer, Flowing Well or Gnadenau, Elim, and Woodrow began, and most of these developed into stable and active churches.

Several settlements began in North Dakota at this time, which led to the formation of congregations at Munich, Harvey, and McClusky, as well as of the smaller congregations Johannestal, Stark, Westheim, Mountain City, and Tuttle. An M. B. Church was organized at Jansen, Nebraska, in 1890, and several small congregations, composed of brethren from the Volga, had their beginning at Sutton, Hastings and Eldorado. In Kansas a settlement began in Butler county in 1889, where an M. B. congregation continued for ten years. In 1889 and 1890 a number of families from M. B. Churches in Nebraska and Kansas moved to Kirk, in the east-central part of Colorado. A short time later another M. B. congregation began at Pueblo, farther southwest. Of the group settling at Kirk, ten families moved to Westfield, in southern Texas, in 1897, where an M. B. congregation existed for five years.

The largest and most noted expansion of the M. B. Church during this period was that in Oklahoma. Here the U. S. government opened vast stretches of land for homesteads and settlement. Beginning with 1892, numerous M. B. families from Kansas, Ne-

braska, and other places hurried into this territory to file for a homestead. These were mostly those who had not yet attained their own farm homes, the majority of whom were young people. The story of their trek and their hardships in pioneer days reads almost as fascinatingly as that of their fathers' coming from Russia in the seventies.

The coming of the Mennonite Brethren into Oklahoma resulted in the formation of a number of congregations, some of which developed into large local churches. Stretching through central Oklahoma from north to south the following churches sprang up: Medford, North Enid, Lahoma, Nord Hoffnungsfeld, Sued Hoffnungsfeld, Okeene, Cooper, Corn, (in early years spelt Korn), Caddo, and Gotebo. Two congregations began also in western Oklahoma; one at Hooker and the other at Boyd or Balko.

The M. B. Church at this time also began to spread westward to the Pacific Coast. Oregon was represented at the General Conference as early as 1892. The first congregation begun in this state was that in Portland, which existed for many years, but remained small. Another congregation began at Dallas, west of Salem, in 1891. M. B. Churches had their beginning in California in 1905. Here the congregations, Reedley, Rosedale, Bakersfield, and Escondido began during this period.

Statistics for this period are meager. Those given in the year-book of the 1896 Conference give the total membership as 1935 and the number of ordained elders and ministers as 36. The 1905 year-book however, gives nearly complete figures, showing the membership as 3487 and the number of ordained elders and ministers as 54, and the congregations, 59.

2. The Annual Conference and Its Expansion

The annual Conferences were continued, the attendance increased constantly, and the work undertaken grew in extent and importance. Questions pertaining to the support of elders, discipline among the members of the church, marriage between members and unbelievers and the performance of such marriages, and the admission of those who had been divorced were some of the points presented to the Conference for deliberation and decision.

For a number of years the matter of a Confession of Faith was discussed and it was at one time agreed to prepare one. A committee was appointed for this purpose. When it was learned that the M. B. Church in Russia was in the process of preparing

one, they decided to wait until this was completed. When the M. B. Church in Russia finally adopted and printed its Confession of Faith, copies were sent to America, and in 1902 the M. B. Conference decided to adopt this as its own Confession of Faith.

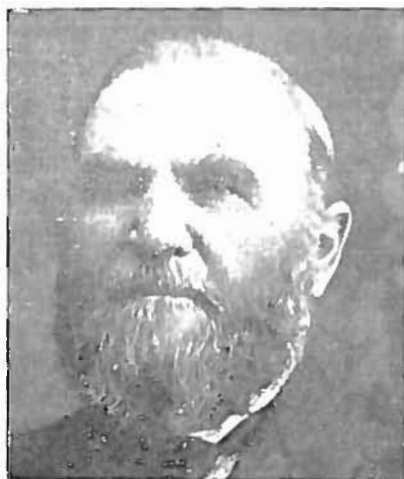
With the beginning of missions in foreign lands, the need for further organization was evident in order to comply with the legal requirements. A charter by which it could be incorporated under the state laws of Kansas was drafted by the Conference in 1900. The Conference of 1906 drew up and adopted a Constitution in which its organization and phases of work were defined and which provided for the carrying out of its activities. According to this constitution the organization is named, "CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA." In this constitution the purpose of the Conference and its organization, and the duties of its officers, boards, and committees are defined. After some further changes were made, it was fully adopted at the 1908 Conference. This constitution was a guide for conference deliberations until 1936 and has served a useful purpose, since work in the business sessions was now done more rapidly and more efficiently.

With the growth and spread of the church, a change in the conference arrangement became necessary. It came to be too expensive and too inconvenient to meet annually and have all the congregations well represented with delegates. A plan to divide the church area into several districts and have each district hold a conference annually, with the General Conference convening only once in three years, was, therefore, strongly advocated at the Conference in 1903. A committee was elected to formulate a workable plan. This committee presented a plan at the next conference, but since there was some opposition to it and since further arrangements with regard to the constitution were necessary, this matter was postponed for later consideration.

A complete plan for dividing the Conference into districts was accepted at the 1910 Conference. According to its provisions, the General Conference meets every third year, deals with those matters which are of common interest to the whole church, and makes the required arrangements for the continuation of such activities. This, in the earlier years, included mainly foreign missions, publication, city missions, and education. The district conferences were to take over home mission work and activities of local concern.

In the working out of this plan a few modifications and changes were made during the first two years. The resultant arrange-

ment was as follows: (1) The Southern District Conference was composed of the churches in Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Texas; (2) the Central District Conference, of those in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Michigan, and Montana; (3) the Pacific District Conference, of those in California, Oregon, and Washington; (4) the Northern District Conference, which has later been named the Canadian Conference, was composed of all the churches in Canada. This plan has been adhered to since 1909 and has been satisfactory to the General Conference as well as to the District Conferences.



Heinrich Voth

3. Home Mission Activities

The years following 1888 mark a period of definite advance and increase in the home mission activities of the church. With the rapid spread of the church into new communities and the beginning of many small organizations there arose a great need as well as wonderful opportunities for such work. The older churches had been able to establish themselves more fully in this land and were, therefore, able to contribute more liberally for missions. The Lord also gave unto the church a large number of younger workers who were able to devote themselves fully to this work, at least for a number of years.

Modifications in arranging the work and in the method of working took place at this time. Some of the older brethren, who

were gifted as Bible expositors and who had the welfare of the churches at heart, traveled extensively among the churches. Their ministry included Bible-study meetings "Bibelstunden" and preaching services, which were mainly aimed at the nurture and instruction of the church members. The elders, Abraham Schellenberg, Johann Foth, Cornelius Wedel, Johann J. Regier, Heinrich Voth, David Dyck, and other brethren did such work for many years and have rendered a much needed and highly valuable service to the church.

Younger evangelists conducted series of prolonged evangelistic meetings in the churches, school houses, and other places where doors opened. These meetings were aimed toward leading the unsaved to an acceptance of Christ. This evangelistic effort



P. P. Rempel

was definitely blessed of the Lord and frequently led to a revival within a church and to the conversion of many of the unsaved. In many cases large baptisms followed, through which the churches increased rapidly.

Among the earlier Conference Evangelists who devoted themselves fully to this work for a number of years and whom the Lord used in this ministry in a special way were the following:—John Harms, who travelled extensively and held successful meetings; P. H. Wedel, a gifted evangelist with good training, who conducted many large revivals from 1892 to 1894; and D. D. Bartel, who was largely used in the south. A little later several other men entered this work and did a blessed service over a period of many

years. P. P. Rempel, a man very effective in preaching, came from Russia in 1901 and devoted himself to evangelism in the Conference for many years. H. S. Voth was a successful and much used evangelist for a long time. J. S. Regier, to whom the Lord had granted a keen insight into the truths of the Word, carried on a most helpful ministry during his short life. C. N. Hiebert, who is still on fire for the Lord, entered the field of evangelism toward the close of this period. Among those who later entered the field of foreign missions under the Conference, were the brethren J. H. Pankratz, D. F. Bergthold, F. J. Wiens, J. H. Voth, and F. A. Janzen, who served as successful evangelists for some time. The brethren H. W. Lohrenz, P. C. Hiebert, and H. F. Toews, who served the church in the field of education for some time, did the work of evangelists in their earlier years.



J. S. Regier

The home mission efforts were not confined to work in the existing congregations, but also included extension work in other communities where doors opened. During these years when the Middle West was being settled there were many opportunities for such mission work and the church should have done more than it has done. The work in Oregon was for some time regarded by the Conference as an extension mission. Here P. C. Hiebert was stationed one year and H. S. Voth for several years.

A remarkable mission, begun in this period, is that among the Russians in Saskatchewan and North Dakota. The Dukhobors, a quaint sect of Russians holding to the principle of non-resistance

but having no Biblical Christianity, lived not far from the Molotschna in Russia in early times when the Mennonites settled there. In 1899 about 8000 of them settled north of the Saskatchewan River in Saskatchewan and were again neighbors to the Mennonites. Some of the brethren realized that here was an opportunity for mission work and that it was their duty to bring the gospel to these people. Hermann Fast, who had done mission work among Russians in St. Petersburg and in Rumania, came to Saskatchewan in 1901 and



Joh. F. Harms

settled as close to these Dukhobors as was possible, with the intention of evangelizing them. Mr. Fast exerted himself very much in this work and not without results. A church composed of converts, not only from the Dukhobors but partly also from other Russians, was established at Petrofka.

At Eagle Creek, farther south, there was a settlement of Ukrainian Russians. They too had known the Mennonite Brethren in

Russia, and many of them had come to faith in Christ through them. Among these, Fast and other brethren ministered so that a congregation could be established. Luka Krawschenko proved to be the most outstanding minister of these two congregations and was ordained to the ministry by David Dyck in 1908.

A settlement of Ukranian Russians among whom were likewise some believers began in central North Dakota at the beginning of this century. Some of the brethren who knew the Russian language came into contact with them and preached the Word to them. Meetings began at Kief and at Max. The Conference has conducted this mission work among the Russians for a number of years. Besides Fast, the brethren J. B. Wiens, J. F. Harms, and L. Seibel have done a valuable ministry among them. It has, however, been very difficult to stabilize the churches and some of the members have joined the Seventh Day Adventists, others the Baptist Church. For a number of years a church paper, "The Golos," was printed for them by the M. B. Publishing House and was subsidized by the Conference. Recently the M. B. Church has again revived its efforts among the Russians, especially in Canada.

Several visits by leading ministerial brethren of the M. B. Church in Russia were greatly appreciated by the Church in America and contributed toward the edification and strengthening of the Church. Elder David Schellenberg visited America in 1890 and again in 1913 and held meetings in many places. In 1890-'91 Jacob W. Reimer, who had been much used of the Lord in Russia, was invited by the Conference to travel throughout the Conference area and hold meetings. In the same way Elder David Duerksen, upon invitation of the Conference, visited the M. B. Churches in 1895. After a term of service on the mission field in India, Abraham Friesen, while on furlough, visited America in the summer of 1899. His visit contributed especially toward arousing interest in foreign missions.

4. Forward Steps in Foreign Missions

The years 1888-1909 constitute a period of time when the M. B. Church took forward steps and launched forth to begin its own foreign missions. The support of native evangelists in India, as well as in Africa, continued for a number of years. In India the Russian M. B. Mission was begun by Abr. Friesen in 1899, and the Conference very soon began to send contributions for the support of native workers. There was, however, a deep longing on

the part of many that the church should have its own foreign mission program. Some of the leading brethren have prayed much during these years that the Lord would bring this to pass. The Lord graciously answered prayers and granted to the M. B. Church devoted workers and fields and willing givers and opened doors for such work.

a. *The Mission to the Comanches in Oklahoma.* The Conference of 1889 appointed the three brethren, Abr. Schellenberg, Cornelius Wedel, and J. F. Harnis as a committee and asked them to find a suitable mission field for work as well as the required mission workers. This committee visited the Indian Reservations in New Mexico and Arizona and found open fields. Since there were



H. Kohfeld

no workers available at that time, no further steps were taken. It was hoped that John Berg, who had been supported during his seminary training at Rochester, New York, would take charge of such a mission, but he became ill so the project was not carried out.

In 1894 the Conference found in Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Kohfeld workers who were willing to serve as missionaries and the three brethren of the committee visited the Comanche Indian area of Oklahoma together with Mr. Kohfeld. Work was at once taken up among this tribe and the Post Oak Mission, five miles northeast of Indianola, was begun. The U. S. government granted one hundred sixty acres of land for the mission, the conference appropriated the required funds, and the needed buildings were

erected. It was at first planned to conduct a mission school, but since this would require boarding arrangements with a considerable outlay of money, this plan was dropped.

The work among the Comanches was slow and difficult, but the Kohfelds continued bravely. In 1898 Maria Regier joined them as a deaconess to assist in the work. In 1901 Abr. J. Becker was also stationed here as an assistant to Mr. Kohfeld. In 1902 Katharina Penner entered the work and took over the work of Miss Regier. In 1906 Mr. and Mrs. Kohfeld retired from the work. In the meantime Mr. Becker had married and now Mr. and Mrs. Becker took full charge of the mission. Several Indians professed faith in Christ and were baptized. In 1909 there were twelve baptized church members and regular congregational services had been established.

b. *The Question of Opening a Mission in Cameroon, Africa.* For some time there was keen interest in the German Baptist Mission in Cameroon, Africa. This was largely due to contacts with missionaries of this mission who reported in the churches of their work. For some time the Conference had supported native evangelists on this field, and it was hoped by some that the M. B. Church would be able to send forth missionaries to this field to work in conjunction with the Baptist mission. In 1895 P. H. Wedel, who had worked in the Conference as an evangelist for a number of years, went to Cameroon, but as a Baptist missionary. This was a rather hard blow for the Conference, for it had hoped for some time that he would either begin a Conference School or would go out as an M. B. missionary.

At the 1896 Conference the matter of opening a mission in Africa was discussed at length. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Enns were present and were about to leave as missionaries to Africa. They were asked to go out under the Conference as its missionaries. They, however, had not expected this and since they had made commitments to the Baptist Mission Board, they too went to Cameroon as Baptist missionaries. This was another disappointment for the Conference. It, however, wished them God's blessing in this ministry and even promised them financial support. Of these first missionaries to foreign lands, coming out of M. B. circles, Mr. and Mrs. Enns both died of the black water fever in less than two years. Mr. Wedel also became ill and had to leave the field. He died at sea on the way home and his body was laid to rest under the waves of the Atlantic. Only Mrs. Wedel saw America again.

This whole experience was saddening to the M. B. Church because its hopes of opening a foreign mission of its own could

not yet be realized and because the service of these young workers was cut short in this way. It, however, also kindled in the hearts of many a new determination to move forward and begin an M. B. Foreign Mission.

c. *The Mission to the Telugus in India.* Interest for beginning a mission in India was even stronger than that of having one in Africa. This can be accounted for because of the fact that there was a contact between the M. B. Church and American Baptist missionaries in India and also because the Russian M. B. Church had begun a mission there for which they were sending financial support. With the development of this mission and with reports coming from it, this interest grew even stronger. It was, however, the desire on the part of Conference leaders not to affiliate themselves with another mission, but to have a mission of their own.

At the 1897 Conference the Foreign Missions Committee was instructed to look for a suitable field and for a man qualified as missionary and to be ready to report at the next Conference. At the following Conference this committee was in a position to report that a mission field could be taken over among the Telugus in the Hyderabad State in southern India, a field adjacent to that of the M. B. Mission from Russia; and that Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Hiebert felt the Lord's call to the foreign field and offered their service for this work.

After hearing Mr. Hiebert's personal testimony, the Conference felt convinced that the Lord was guiding them, that He was entrusting unto them a sacred work to do for Him, and that He was providing the workers. It was unanimously decided to send these workers to India with the intention of opening an American Mennonite Brethren Mission there. The Conference was deeply moved and many were in tears as some of the leading brethren led in prayer, beseeching the Lord for His blessing in this undertaking.

While the committee proceeded to arrange for sending the Hieberts to India, Elizabeth Neufeld applied as a missionary candidate and informed them that the Lord had called her to India to serve there as a teacher. She was accepted and in the summer of 1899 the three young mission workers sailed for India, arriving in the Hyderabad State in October. Anna Suderman, a member of the M. B. Church, who had gone to India the previous year and had begun working in a mission in the Bombay Presidency, felt the Lord's call to join the group of M. B. missionaries. She was formally accepted at the 1899 Conference, and so the four formed our first group of M. B. missionaries to India.

The Conference became deeply attached to the India Mission and gave it full support. When the Hieberts were compelled to return to America in 1901 due to illness, new mission workers were found in Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Pankratz, who were sent out in 1902. During the following years the Conference accepted and sent out to India the missionaries—Mr. and Mrs. D. F. Bergthold, 1904, Katharina L. Schellenberg, 1906, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Voth and Katharina Lohrenz, 1908, and Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Janzen, 1910.

The growth of interest in the work of the missions and the increase of contributions for the cause is remarkable. The total contributions for foreign missions for the fiscal year ending October 1, 1888, amounted to \$1277.85. For the year ending October 1, 1909, the total was \$13,158.27. The contributions had thus increased more than tenfold during the twenty-one years. The mission festivals held at conference time and in the churches on other occasions contributed largely toward increasing the zeal for foreign missions.

5. Publication Work and Its Growth

The "Zionsbote" continued to be published as a weekly paper and became the official organ of the M. B. Church. The Conference elected a committee of three to supervise its publication interests. Among the brethren who have rendered valuable service in this committee during the early years were Peter Regier, Johann Foth, John Harms, and J. K. Hiebert. J. F. Harms continued as editor of the "Zionsbote" and as manager of the publication work until 1906. In 1899 he moved to Medford, Oklahoma, with his press. In 1903 the Conference took over the press and purchased some more machinery, thus beginning its own publishing house.

When J. F. Harms resigned in 1906, after serving the Conference as editor for twenty-one years, A. L. Schellenberg was elected to succeed him. The Conference at this time purchased a building at McPherson, Kansas, and moved the press there.

With the growth of the Sunday School work, a Sunday School Lessons Quarterly with the lessons and notes became necessary. In 1899 P. F. Duerksen began to publish such a quarterly. This met with general approval and was used quite extensively among M. B. congregations. He also began to publish a weekly Sunday School paper, the "Sonntagsschul Bote." Both of these publications were, however, soon discontinued.

The Conference now appointed an editor for preparing the Sunday School Quarterly and the M. B. Publishing house printed

and distributed it; a method which has been pursued to the present time. J. F. Duerksen, D. D. Bartel, H. W. Lohrenz, and N. N. Hiebert have served the Conference as editor of the Sunday School Quarterly in the early years.

In 1905 the Conference began the publication of the "Golos," a Christian paper in the Russian language, which was intended for the Russian M. B. Churches in Saskatchewan and North Dakota. Hermann Fast edited this paper. It was discontinued after five year.

6. City Missions

The beginning of M. B. City Mission work falls into the closing years of this period. For a number of years sentiment for beginning a city mission had manifested itself in the Conference. This interest had partly been created by the evangelists and theological students, who had come into contacts with the cities and had seen the needs and opportunities for such work. The 1907 Conference elected the three brethren, J. J. Kliwer, N. N. Hiebert, and J. C. Dick as a City Missions Committee and instructed them to look for a suitable field and for proper workers.

Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wiens had at that time just begun a work at Hurley and Gile, Wisconsin, under another organization, but they wished to be accepted as workers by the Conference. The Conference accepted them as its city missionaries and undertook the responsibility for this mission. In 1908 Katherina Klassen entered the mission as a worker. It soon became evident that a more desirable place should be selected and in 1910 the mission at Hurley and Gile, Wisconsin, was abandoned and a new mission was started at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

7. Advance in Education

A realization of the importance of providing an education for its young people laid hold on the M. B. Church only gradually. Shortly after the school conducted by J. F. Harms at Canada and Lehigh, Kansas, had been discontinued, a similar school, operated by an association, "Vereinsschule," was begun at Buhler, Kansas. Here J. F. Duerksen, who had been a successful school teacher in Russia, taught this school for several years, beginning in 1890. This school in a measure promoted the interests in education when sentiment for it was weak in the M. B. Church. It also offered an opportunity for education to a fair number of young people.

The school, however, was destined to meet the same fate as the school at Lehigh, several years earlier.

About the lack of interest in education during the early nineties J. F. Duerksen writes as follows: "At this time interest in education was at an exceedingly low ebb. Only here and there could a friend of education be found. The migrations to Oklahoma occupied the attention of many, and for some time the financial panic of 1893 seriously affected all church enterprises." The two facts mentioned may partly account for a temporary decline in the educational work in Kansas.

It was in 1897 that the M. B. Church became more acquainted with the College of the Dunkard Brethren at McPherson, Kansas.



J. F. Duerksen

J. F. Duerksen began to give instruction in German at this college. The following year the faculty and board of trustees of this school made an offer to the M. B. Conference. They were willing to let the Conference have the use of several rooms in their college building for conducting a German Department School. The Conference was not immediately ready to accept such an offer and to take full responsibility for such a school. J. F. Duerksen had, however, already ventured forth on faith and begun with such a school in the fall of 1898, having one student to begin with. During the year the number increased to eleven. Amid hardships and disappointments he stayed at the work and as the number of students increased, the prospects for the school began to look more promising.

This school project was further discussed at the 1899 Conference and it was decided to raise the salary for Duerksen, which was fixed at \$400.00 annually, by free will offerings in the churches. The Conference from this time began to support the school and also considered the establishing of a fund for this purpose. The Conference thus gradually came into possession of a school of its own. An educational committee had charge of the Conference side of supervising and supporting the school. The brethren J. F. Harms, Cornelius Hiebert, and H. P. Schroeder served on this committee. J. F. Duerksen continued to head the school as teacher.

For some time the school flourished and the enrollment increased each year, having 11 students the first year and 60 the seventh year. In all 249 young people, coming from M. B. and K. M. B. Church circles, attended the school during the seven years of its existence.

Many brethren did not approve of the doctrine of the Dunkard Brethren and, therefore, did not favour a connection with them in a school. Beginning with 1903 a sentiment unfavorable toward the continuation of the school began to develop. At the 1904 Conference it was decided to discontinue this German Department School with the current school year, and to raise the required funds and pay all the arrears for teacher's salary. This was completed at the following Conference. Though it is to be regretted that the first educational project of the Conference terminated in this way, it must be said that the fruits of this school have been gratifying and that the effort has well paid the church. From those attending as students have come a number of noted Conference workers: ministers, evangelists, missionaries, and educators.

A fairly large number of young men coming from M. B. churches attended the German section of the Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, New York, and some also the English section of the same school during this time. Of these students some have left the M. B. Church and have entered work in connection with the Baptist Church. A number, however, have become useful workers of the M. B. Conference in its home and foreign mission fields.

The beginning of Tabor College, at Hillsboro, Kansas, in 1908 falls into the close of this period, but we shall leave this subject for the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE M. B. CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES 1909- 1924

The year 1924 completes fifty years of history of the M. B. Church in America. The years 1909 to 1924, therefore, mark off another period of activities of the church. The general features of this time are the ever increasing activities of the several General Conference, the harmonious working of the District Conference, the further growth of the local churches and the increase of their number.

We shall deal with the development and activities of the several District Conferences in later chapters and in those connections shall also take note of the beginning of further local churches in each conference. It should, however, be stated here that in 1924, fifty years after the M. B. Church began in America, it was composed of 86 local churches, numbered 8,412 church members, and had 110 ordained ministers.

1. The Triennial General Conference Sessions

The plan of holding the General Conference once every three years and of having the district conference convene annually was put into operation immediately after the 1909 Conference, and it worked very satisfactorily. The General Conference met every third year except in 1918, when the influenza epidemic raged, when it was held the following year instead. Attendance and representation by delegates increased. At the 1909 Conference 37 churches were represented by 115 delegates, at the 1912 Conference there were 45 churches represented by 162 delegates. Since the Conference now convened only once in three years, there was need of having more responsibility given over to the various committees and boards and more work was done by them directly. The relationship between the General Conference and the district conferences has been a cordial and brotherly one.

A noted change came in the Conference during this time when most of the earlier leading brethren either passed to their heavenly reward, or had to withdraw on account of old age. The brethren Heinrich Voth and M. M. Just, who had served as chairman and

assistant chairman at the 1915 Conference, both passed away before another Conference convened. Abr. Schellenberg was called to the home above in 1920. The brethren Johann Foth, David Dyck, Heinrich Adrian and J. F. Harms, though continuing a number of years longer, found their strength waning, and had to leave the noble work for others to do. The Lord graciously provided other leaders: H. H. Flaming, H. W. Lohrenz, H. S. Voth, John Berg and others began to shoulder grave responsibilities. The Lord's guidance was experienced in the conference deliberations and His blessings manifestly rested upon the efforts.



M. M. Just

2. Foreign Missions

The work of foreign missions has since 1909 been the most important phase of General Conference activity. It had a prominent place on the program of the festival Sunday and occupied a large share of the time during the deliberations. The church keenly felt that it had a solemn duty before God to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature. The Board of Directors, "Direktorium," consisting of nine men, of whom three were elected at each conference, was usually composed of the strongest men the Conference had. Of the men who have had a leading part in the Board during this period are Heinrich Voth, N. N. Hiebert, M. M. Just, J. W. Wiens, and H. W. Lohrenz. A fine spirit of coopera-

tion between the Board and the Conference as well as between the Board and the missionaries prevailed.

With the adoption of the constitution, in 1908, provision was made for a Mission Fund, the proceeds of which went for the support of foreign missions. A committee of Assistants, "Verwaltungs Komitee," of sixty members was instituted, which was so chosen that it would have a fair representation of the churches in all the localities. The duty of this committee was to procure promissory notes from church members, to collect the interest when due, and remit the amount to the Mission Board treasurer. The Conference had through this provision built up a fund of \$64,991.00 by 1924.



A. J. Becker

The contributions for foreign missions as a whole continued to increase. The total amount for the year ending October 1, 1924, for the General treasury and the treasury of assigned contributions together was \$61,085.21.

The work at the Post Oak Mission, Indianahoma, among the Comanche Indians, was continued and the Beckers remained in this service throughout this entire period. Maria Heinrichs was accepted as worker for this mission in 1917 and she continued in this service for a number of years. Additional converts from among the Indians were won and the congregation increased. A friendly attitude prevailed between the Mission and the U. S. governmental administration of the Indian reservation. Mrs. Becker was for many years an appointed matron for the Indians. The cemetery, begun at the mission premises, has been made use of by all the

Indians of the surrounding territory for the burial of their dead, and so a large and imposing cemetery has developed here during the years.

The Mission to the Telugus in southern India continued to be the major foreign mission project of the Conference throughout this period. The return of the earlier missionaries for furloughs and their reports of the progress in the work enhanced the interest of the churches in this mission as well as in missions in general. Since the 1909 Conference the following new missionaries were accepted and sent to India: Anna Hanneman and Mary C. Wall, 1915; Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Lohrenz and Helena L. Warkentin, 1920; Mr. and Mrs. P. V. Balzer, 1923. The Board had planned and hoped to send out more missionaries, but the first World War and its after-effects delayed this. The close of this period, however, shows sixteen active missionaries on the India field.

At the 1909 Conference the question of beginning a mission in China came up for discussion, since Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Wiens had expressed their desire to go to China and open an M. B. Mission there, and since there appeared to be much sentiment for such a mission in the churches. It was, therefore, decided to authorize the Foreign Mission Board to send Mr. and Mrs. Wiens to China and open a mission if possible.

This decision, however, could not be carried out immediately, and in 1910 the Wiens family left for China by way of Russia and arrived in China in the spring of 1911. They were not sent out by the Board, but received their financial support from many friends in the M. B. Churches in America and Russia. In China they opened a mission among the Hakkas, on a field about two hundred miles inland from Swatow, and began an aggressive work. Through their frequent reports they remained in close contact with the churches in America.

At the 1915 Conference the Wienses were represented with a lengthy report of the work the Lord had entrusted unto them in China and with the request that the Conference accept them as missionaries and the station and field as a Conference mission. In the deliberations it appeared that opinions varied greatly. It was at last decided that the Conference go so far as to support the mission with \$500.00 annually until the next Conference.

At the following Conference, 1919, this point was again taken up for consideration and discussed. J. H. Pankratz, who, on the way home from India, had visited the mission, reported very favourably of the work done by the Wienses, and the sentiment for taking

over the mission was strong in the Conference. The mission was taken over and a budget was accepted, which allowed a salary for the missionaries and full appropriations for the support of the work. The Conference also accepted Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dick, Tina Kornelsen, and Helena Hoeppner as missionaries for China and they were sent to this field the following spring. Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wiens, who had for some time been expecting to go to India, were sent to China in 1921. The sisters Maria Richert and Sophia Richert were sent out the following year and Paulina Foote a little later, and Adelgunda Priebe still later.

At the 1919 Conference the question of beginning a Conference Mission in Africa came into consideration. Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen, who had gone to the Belgian Congo in 1912 and begun an independent mission, had written to the Conference and asked whether the Conference would wish to take over the mission. The Conference, however, felt that it was not quite ready to take over still more work at this time.

With the close of the World War in 1918 it appeared that a new zeal and determination to do foreign mission work had laid hold on the M. B. Church. The 1919 Conference took a definite forward step in foreign missions. The constituency contributed more freely of what the Lord had entrusted unto them than ever before. More young people offered their life and service for the cause of missions than at any previous time.

Keen interest in foreign missions continued to prevail in the various local churches. Mission festivals with special stress on the work in the foreign fields kept the home fires burning. In many of the churches the Sunday Schools, the Young Peoples' Societies, and the Sisters' Sewing Circles made liberal contributions for missions, or they sent definite amounts annually for the support of a native evangelist or of a Bible woman on one of the fields. A number of individuals began to contribute in this way. The problem of adjusting assigned contributions in their relation to the general mission budget in such a way that the all-over needs of the missions could be met began to make itself felt at this time. Only gradually could this matter be solved.

3. The Publication Effort

The period under survey shows definite advance and growth in the publication activities of the M. B. Church. The publishing interests transferred from Medford, Oklahoma, to McPherson, Kan-

sas, early in 1906 were moved to Hillsboro, Kansas, in 1912. Here a substantial building was erected the following year. A. L. Schellenberg continued as manager of the publishing house and as editor of the "Zionsbote" from 1907 to 1919 and again from 1923 to 1929, a period of nineteen years. During the interval between, J. D. Fast held this position. The brethren J. K. Hiebert, John Block, and Abr. J. Richert served the Conference on the Publication Committee for many years.

The growth of the publication work is seen in the increase of subscribers for the "Zionsbote," in the expansion of the "Hillsboro Vorwaerts," in the increase of job-work, and in the opening of a book store. The net value of the publishing establishment on October 1, 1924, amounted to \$24,661.52. The brethren N. N.



A. L. Schellenberg

Hiebert and J. F. Duerksen edited the Sunday School Quarterly during this period. A monthly paper, the "Saengerbote," edited by A. G. Sawatsky, was published for a number of years. It was intended to promote general singing and choir singing in the churches. At the 1921 Conference a committee was elected and instructed to take steps for the publishing of the "Saengerbote" as a Conference paper and also to prepare a hymnal for the church and have it printed. The "Saengerbote" was then published as a quarterly paper for some time. An M. B. Church Hymnal, however, did not materialize. The "Zions Glaubenstimme" was at one time recommended as a hymnal in the Church and came into use to some extent. The "Evangeliums Lieder," however, was the

song book used most commonly in M. B. churches. The song book, "Zions Lieder," prepared and issued by J. J. Franz, and printed at the M. B. Publishing House, came into common use in Young People's Meetings. A book department was organized in 1922.

It is worthy to note that in 1924, when the fifteenth anniversary of the coming of the first Mennonite Brethren to America was commemorated, J. F. Harns wrote a history of the Mennonite Brethren Church, "Geschichte der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde, 1860-1924." This history is in part written by the author himself, in part it is compiled from reports sent to him by representative writers in various churches. It has been of special value in retaining much data of the beginning and early history of the local churches.

4. The South Side Mission, Minneapolis

The South Side City Mission, established at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1910 was continued during this entire period. The brethren J. J. Kliewer, N. N. Hiebert, and J. C. Dick, who had been elected by the Conference as a City Mission Committee in 1908, continued to supervise this work for a number of years. Later they were replaced by other brethren. H. S. Voth, A. J. Wiebe, and D. D. Hiebert have all served on the committee for a greater length of time since then.

After the mission had become established in Minneapolis, Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wiens stepped out of the work in 1912 and Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Smith and Katherina Klassen continued the mission. Anna M. Hiebert joined them as a worker in 1915 and when Miss Klassen stepped out of the work in 1919, Katharina E. Pauls took her place. Since the erection of a suitable mission became a necessity, funds for this purpose were solicited, and in 1917 a two story building was erected at 2120 Minnehaha Ave. This building provides on the main floor a chapel seating about two hundred people and several class rooms. The basement has a kitchen and recreation rooms. The second story has suitable living quarters for the missionaries.

The work of the mission has consisted mainly in holding services in the Mission Chapel, Sunday School, gospel preaching on the streets, hospital and jail and home visitations, and the conducting of a nursery for little children. During the course of years many souls were won for Christ, but a stable local church did not materialize. Since the Canadian District Conference began its own City Mission in Winnipeg, the question arose, whether the General

Conference might take over this Mission also. This was, however, not done. An arrangement was made by which the offerings on Thanksgiving Day should at least in part go toward the support of the City Mission in Minneapolis.

5. Advance in Education

a. *Tabor College.* In the previous chapter Tabor College at Hillsboro, Kansas, was mentioned. During this period, this institution became the chief center of educational effort on the part of



H. W. Lohrenz

the M. B. Church. Its establishing and development should, therefore, receive consideration at this time.

When the 1904 Conference decided to discontinue the German Department School at McPherson, Kansas, it expressed the hope, that a School Association "Schul Verein," would be organized and take up the educational problem of the Church. During the winter of 1907-1908 much effort was put forth in the churches in Kansas to unite the friends of education in the M. B. Church and in the K. M .B. Church into such a School Association. The brethren H. W. Lohrenz and J. K. Hiebert were especially active in getting the

movement on foot. The Lord graciously blessed these efforts and such an organization was effected.

When this School Association was organized it aimed to establish and conduct a higher institution of learning, which would meet the educational needs of the M. B. Church and of the K. M. B. Church. When organizing itself the Association elected a Board of Directors on which the M. B. Church was represented with six members and the K. M. B. Church with three members. By ballot vote it was decided that the school should be at Hillsboro, Kansas, and the name chosen for it was Tabor College. Funds for building were solicited and in the spring of 1908 the erection of an administration building was begun.



J. K. Hiebert

Tabor College opened its first school-year in September, 1908, with an enrollment of 39 students. During the year the number increased to 102. The faculty, as chosen by the Board of Directors, consisted of H. W. Lohrenz, president; P. C. Hiebert, vice-president; and P. P. Rempel, Bible teacher. Several assistants were also engaged for work in lower classes. During the first three years the work was confined to the teaching of classes on the academy level, but gradually the school developed into a college, conferring the first A. B. degrees in 1913. The faculty was strengthened through the addition of D. E. Harder and H. F. Toews as teachers. These two brethren together with H. W. Lohrenz and P. C. Hiebert have served the school for many years. Other teachers were added to the faculty as the school expanded.

The main objective in establishing and conducting the college was to train young men and young women for a useful vocation in life, for the teaching profession, and for work in the church, such as the ministry, evangelism, home and foreign mission work, and other church work. The courses were, therefore, laid out accordingly and the required teachers were procured in so far as possible. A Normal Training Course was offered, which prepared the students for teaching in public schools, and many teachers have gone forth from Tabor, not a few of them into communities where M. B. churches were represented. The Bible Course was strengthened as the years progressed and from the young people pursuing the same, a fair number have become useful workers in the churches and in missions.



P. C. Hiebert

A sad calamity befell the school on April 30, 1918, when the administration building burnt down. The friends of the school, however, again took courage and at once began to raise funds for the construction of a larger and more adequate building. The Lord graciously prospered these efforts and in September, 1921, the new building was dedicated to the Lord and for the cause of training young people to serve Him better. A dormitory for women students with a dining hall in the basement was built at the same time. A substantial annuity gift from Mary J. Regier made this possible.

The college prospered and increased in the scope of its activities in the face of various difficulties and often under the burden of insufficient funds. Many of its supporters, however, contributed

liberally for the building of the college as well as for its maintenance, and many have interceded much in prayer for this noble cause. In the spring of 1924, when the school had completed sixteen years of instruction, the report showed that more than 1000 students had attended during this time and that 477 had graduated with a diploma from one of the several courses. The school year closing then showed an enrollment of 301 students and the graduating class that year numbered 57. The financial report presented at the 1924 Conference showed the monetary value of the institution to be \$198,960.80. Of this amount \$150,680.84 had been paid and \$37,026.67 more was covered by notes, pledges, and bonds.



H. F. Toews

b. *Other Schools.* The educational interests of the M. B. Church have during this period not been confined to Tabor College. In 1902 the church at Corn, Oklahoma, built its Bible School and Academy. Though the school began small and was intended for local needs, its students have also come from other Oklahoma churches and a few from other states. After moving to Oklahoma in 1905, J. F. Duerksen served this school as principal for eleven years. H. D. Wiebe, who assumed the principalship in 1919, filled this position for nineteen years. Other brethren ministered in this school for a shorter time.

A Bible School was begun at Herbert, Saskatchewan, in 1913. J. F. Harms, who took the initiative in its founding, served as teacher during the first few years. This school has been of special value to the churches in Saskatchewan.

A number of young people have during this time also attended different schools outside the Conference. Some went to Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, others to the Bible Institute at Los Angeles. A number of those who wished to pursue further advanced studies attended state universities, other colleges, or various theological seminaries. Some of these have later returned to our M. B. Churches and have become useful workers, others have found their sphere of activities elsewhere.

6. The World War and the M. B. Church

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 created for the M. B. Church a new situation, raised new problems, and brought the Mennonite position of non-resistance and non-participation in war to the foreground. In Canada, where the country was involved immediately, no special difficulties were encountered, for the government had at the time of immigration given to the Mennonites the assurance that their position, with reference to warfare, would be respected and that they would be exempted from military service. This promise was duly respected and adhered to.

When in 1917 the United States entered the war and instituted general conscription for military service, the government made provision for those who conscientiously objected to such service. These provisions, which allowed other service than combatant, were reasonable and the government was very considerate toward Mennonites and similar sects. In the application of the provisions and in the working out of arrangements, some of the lower officials have, however, treated some of the young men, who were called for service, rather severely. Some of them have been imprisoned, and others have been insulted and abused.

On the whole, young men from the M. B. Church behaved themselves nobly and gave a clear testimony of their position because of what Christ has definitely taught. They refused combatant service, most of them declined any form of service within the military establishment or to wear the uniform. A large number were assigned to farm work, special hospital work, or reconstruction work.

The Conference felt that its position, with reference to the teaching on non-resistance, was not clearly defined in its Confession of Faith and at the 1919 session this was discussed and a change proposed. The three brethren, H. W. Lohrenz, H. A. Neufeld, and John Berg were appointed as a committee to study this point

and report at the following Conference. This was done and the required modification was made.

A standing committee dealing with matters pertaining to non-resistance was also instituted at this time, and the brethren H. W. Lohrenz, G. Wiens and John Berg were elected to this committee. Though the experiences of the M. B. Church during the war were not pleasant in the least, it was afterwards felt that the testings had aroused many out of their slumber and that a new orientation on the Biblical teaching on non-resistance had been accomplished. Most of the young men called by the government were later stronger in their faith and firmer in their convictions than before.

7. Launching Out on Relief Work

During the war-years the M. B. churches were not idle and did not in the least give the impression that they only wished to enjoy the privileges of a free land without doing anything in return. Where others loaned their money for war purposes and purchased liberty bonds, many Mennonites gave their money in liberal amounts for Red Cross work and to various other agencies doing relief.

When the war came to a close the needs for doing relief work on a large scale were appalling, and the M. B. Church, along with other Mennonites, now saw their great opportunity. At first the need appeared to be greatest in Armenia, Syria, and in Siberia, and some of the young men worked there in relief service together with the Friends.

The appalling need, however, soon appeared in southern Russia, where, due to the chaos following the revolution and crop failures, a severe famine set in. The 1921 Conference report tells of how this need was discussed and of how plans were made to do their utmost to alleviate the suffering by sharing their bread with others. Arrangements were made to send relief to Russia, and J. W. Wiens was appointed to receive contributions and forward them. The resolution was that every member should on the average contribute one dollar a month if possible. The contributions soon began to pour in heavily and large sums were raised. J. F. Harms has also for a number of years received contributions and has forwarded these, as well as food parcels, to Russia.

In this relief work the M. B. Church found it most practical and most satisfactory to cooperate with other Mennonite bodies, and for this purpose the Mennonite Central Committee was organized. Early in 1922 the way was open for the relief workers to go

to Russia and undertake relief work. Among the early representatives in this mission of mercy was P. C. Hiebert of the M. B. Church, who represented the Conference in the M. C. C. and who has also served as its chairman for many years. His book, "Feeding the Hungry," tells in detail of the famine, the sufferings, and the ministry of relief in Russia.

A Relief Committee of seven members was appointed at the **1924 Conference** to direct its relief efforts. The church has since then earnestly endeavoured to do its part to alleviate the want and sufferings of mankind in other countries as far as possible.

CHAPTER VII

THE M. B. CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES 1924-1949

The history of the Mennonite Brethren Church during the quarter century 1924 to 1949 is characterized by several outstanding facts: Another influx of Mennonites from Europe at the beginning of this period resulted in rapid growth and further expansion of the church. The General Conference continued to develop and it underwent some noted changes through reorganization, and its various activities show remarkable progress. The church has retained its zeal for missions. As a result of the recent World War II and its after-effects, some definite changes have come about in the M. B. Church. In treating the various events and the ever widening phases of activity during this period, we can present them only in a brief and a condensed way.

1. The Church: Its Growth and Change

a. *New Immigrations from Russia.* The years 1923 to 1930 mark another period in North American Mennonite history comparable to the one of 1874 to 1880, when thousands of Mennonites migrated from Europe to America. The devastating World War I, the breakdown of the Russian government, the chaos coming over the land through the Bolshevist revolution, and the anti-Christian attitude of the new regime, compelled the Mennonites to leave and to seek a home in some other country.

The countries toward which their eyes were turned, were U. S. A., Mexico, and Canada. The immigration restrictions in force in the U. S. A. made immigration into this land on a large scale impossible. Only a small number were able to obtain entrance. A limited number went in small groups to Mexico, but most of these left this land some time later. Canada held the best prospects for them.

The migration of these Mennonites was beset with grave difficulties. It was hard to procure a passport in Russia, and in the course of several years it became impossible. Transportation was expensive and since their property was confiscated by the com-

munistic government, most of them were entirely without means. In Canada an Order in Council was in force after 1919 which forbade the further immigration of Mennonites. Moreover, the settling in a new country, establishing a home there, and finding a way of making a living, would be most difficult. These and other obstacles stood before them, as they planned to leave the country in which they had prospered so wonderfully.

The incident of history where 21,000 of these unfortunate Mennonites managed to leave Russia and come to Canada is a very remarkable one. It can be attributed only to God's interference and guidance in answer to prevailing prayer. By 1923 it became possible for many to obtain passports and leave Russia. The Canadian government revoked its order which forbade the immigration of Mennonites. The Canadian Pacific Railroad Company agreed to make a contract under favorable terms and transport these Mennonites. Their brethren, the various Mennonite bodies in Canada and in the U. S. A., were ready to assist in whatever way they could.

In order to aid in this immigration movement, the different branches of Mennonites in Canada formed the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, of which David Toews was president and chief promoter. This organization did much to procure permission for entrance of these Mennonites into Canada, arranged for their transportation and their support while detained in European ports, and assisted them upon arrival in providing a temporary home and in settling them. Many Canadian Mennonite families kept one or more of these immigrant families in their homes for a shorter or longer time and helped them in many ways.

In July, 1923, the first large group of over six hundred arrived. These were soon followed by more and in the following years by still more. The peak was reached in 1926, when nearly 6000 came. Most of these settled on farms, where they, in many cases, met with disappointments and struggled with poverty in early years. The Mennonite Land Settlement Board did much in advising and assisting them to procure land and to establish their homes. A fair number also went into the cities and towns where opportunities for earning something were better. Many young women found work in domestic service in city homes.

Among these immigrant Mennonites a fair proportion were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church. These either joined with existing M. B. congregations or established congregations of their own in new settlements. Their coming and uniting with the

M. B. Church accounts mainly for the rapid growth of the church in Canada since 1924.

b. *Spread and Growth of the Church.* The M. B. Church has had a rapid spread and growth during this period. This has been especially the case in Canada, where, due to the immigration, the Church spread over the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. In the U. S. A., where the increase was not so marked and where numerous small congregations were discontinued, it nevertheless, also has had a healthy growth on the whole and is at present represented in thirteen states.

The more detailed reference to particular settlements and to the beginning of further congregations will be given in the chapters dealing with the District Conferences. In 1936 the M. B. Church numbered 116 congregations with 13,320 members. According to the statistics gathered and compiled by A. A. Schroeter for the 1948 General Conference the figures are as follows as of January 1, 1948:

	<i>Canadian Conference</i>	<i>Southern Conference</i>	<i>Central Conference</i>	<i>Pacific Conference</i>	<i>Total</i>
Churches reporting	82	28	16	15	141
Membership	9,579	4,334	1,417	3,839	19,169
Workers:					
Ord. ministers	213	57	25	56	351
Ministerial helpers	80	22	1	8	111
Ordained deacons	87	35	9	30	161
Deacons not ord.	48	22	11	20	101
Act. in Home Miss.	60	14	10	22	106
In Foreign Missions	46	28	14	35	123
Total workers	534	178	70	171	953
Value of Church					
Property	\$542,025.00	\$404,900.00	\$141,700.00	\$503,150.00	\$1,591,775.00

c. *Changes in the M. B. Church.* During this period several noticeable changes have come about in the M. B. Church. Though the church still retains its doctrinal position as held in the beginning, and endeavors to remain true to Christ, to the Word of God, and to the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints," some definite changes in practice and arrangements in the church have taken place. These have largely been occasioned by adjustments to new conditions and trends in church life in America in general, and were enhanced by the recent War and its after effects.

In early years the German language was generally used in all the services and activities of the churches as well as in conferences.

In recent years the churches in the U. S. A. have gradually switched over to the English language and this is now used almost exclusively. In Canada the German has been chiefly adhered to until now, which is mainly due to the large influx of members through the more recent immigration from Europe. This change in language, though fraught with some dangers, became necessary in many churches in order to keep the young people and children, and in order to provide for them the required spiritual nurture. One result of this change in language has been that it widened the opportunities for home mission activities in America.

Probably the most noted changes of recent years have come in the nature of the ministry. The early provision of having an elder, "Aeltester," in a large congregation, who was assisted by a number of ministers, has been abandoned. No elders have been elected or ordained during the past twenty-five years. Whether this change is for the better or not is an open question. In many churches, principally in Canada, the custom of having several ministers, who serve the church with the preaching of the Word but earn their living by another occupation, still prevails. In the churches of the U. S. A. this arrangement has been largely discontinued and each congregation elects or selects a minister for full time service, remunerates him with a salary, and provides him with a parsonage. This transition has come gradually and not without difficulties. In many cases the churches found it difficult to adjust themselves to this change and the ministers had their hardships in performing their duties to the full satisfaction of the church. In many churches a change of ministers has been rather frequent. A more stable ministry, well grounded in the Word, wholly yielded to Christ, sympathetic toward the principles of our Church, and willing to bring the sacrifice required of those who would fulfill God-pleasing Christian ministry, is one of the paramount needs of the M. B. Church today. The membership of the churches should earnestly beseech the Lord to grant unto them the "gifts" described in Ephesians, chapter four, and should heed the injunction of Hebrews 13:7 and 17.

The type of evangelistic workers and the nature of their work has undergone modifications. Forty years ago the church had a large number of evangelists, who were the product of the churches. These were constantly engaged in holding prolonged evangelistic meetings and their service was in demand. In recent years evangelistic workers coming from our own churches and devoting themselves fully to this type of ministry are rare. Evangelists engaged

for holding meetings have frequently been called from other denominations. This has especially been the case in the larger congregations. Church centered revivals with many conversions, which mainly accounted for the rapid growth of the churches a generation ago, have become rare.

2. The General Conference: Its Development and Reorganization

During this period the General Conference continued to guide and direct the affairs of the M. B. Church. Its triennial sessions continued to gain in importance and its activities to increase in scope. At the last Conference, August, 1948, which was held at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, 76 churches were represented by 368 delegates. These included all the districts as well as two delegates from South America. In addition to these many visitors were present. Though this gathering has come to take on such large dimensions, some local church or a group of local churches still continues to serve as host to the Conference.

At the two conferences preceding 1928, plans were discussed and formed for observing the year 1928 as a year of jubilee to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the M. B. Conference. It was decided to raise a fund of \$100,000.00, of which the proceeds were to be used for the welfare and education of the youth of the Church. Substantial sums were collected for this fund, but the goal was not nearly reached. This fund is partly in the custody of the Conference Board of Trustees and partly in the possession of various local churches. The earnings of the fund are used for the support of Tabor College and for the support of Bible Schools.

At the 1930 Conference the need of thoroughly revising the Constitution and adapting it so as to provide a more efficient way of business procedure and to include all the phases of Conference work was discussed. A committee of eight, in which each District Conference was represented with two members, was elected and to it was assigned this revision. This committee reported at the following Conference, and it was decided to submit the drafted constitution to the churches for further consideration. This was done and with some further modifications and additions the Constitution was adopted by the Conference in 1936.

This Constitution which has since then been in force, and which has been amended on a few minor points, provides direction

and regulation for the various activities of the church. It was printed in German as well as in English in 1936. It included the original Charter adopted by the M. B. Conference in 1900, whereby the Conference was incorporated, as well as the later amendments to the Charter, when the Conference plan was changed and provisions were made to meet triennially. The section of By-Laws is the part that underwent a thorough revision and received extensive additions.

The twenty-two articles of the By-Laws include the following: a short statement as to confession of faith and doctrinal position; the relation of the churches to the Conference; the convening of the Conference, membership in the same and its organization; the list of officers serving the Conference and their duties; regulations for doing foreign, home, and city mission work; provision for publication and educational efforts; regulation of general welfare and public relations; and the relation between the General Conference and the District Conferences.

The Committee of Reference and Counsel, composed of the officers of the Conference and four additional members, was established by conference action in 1930. Its function is to care for the spiritual needs and welfare of the Church, and to advise and aid the local churches when serious questions arise concerning doctrine, discipline, or church polity. It is also to assist other boards or committees where these apply for counsel on questions of fundamental importance. This committee reports at the General Conference sessions and it also deals with the questions and matters referred to it at that time.

The Board of Trustees, composed of nine members, was established with the adoption of the Constitution of 1936. The newly created Board took over the function of administering the endowment funds and the trusteeship of all Conference property which had formerly been in the hands of the Board of Foreign Missions. This Board has in its custody all the permanent funds of the Conference, receives bequests and donations for those funds, loans out the funds, and pays the accrued interests to the treasuries entitled to such earnings. It also is entrusted with all real estate and investments of the Conference. On July 1, 1948, this Board had in custody a total of \$505,566.27 in assets.

The Conference extended its sphere still further at the 1948 session, when it received the Conference of M. B. Churches of Paraguay and Brazil as another District Conference, entitling the same to representation and participation in all of its activities.

3. Foreign Mission Effort: Its Expansion and Advance

Foreign Missions have continued to hold a prominent place in the life and effort of the M. B. Church during this entire period. At the conference this work has received much attention; the mission reports have captivated in a unique way the interest of those attending. Intercessory prayer at conferences, in churches, in the homes of the members, and in the private chamber of many individuals, has accounted mainly for this unabated interest in foreign missions. There has been an ever-increasing number of young men and young women, who have dedicated themselves for foreign mission service. Until October, 1949, 139 foreign mission workers have gone forth under the M. B. Church. Besides these a large number of members from our churches have labored in other missions. There has been a continual increase in financial contributions for foreign missions, though the depression years, 1932-1936, showed a temporary decline. The total contribution for foreign missions by the M. B. Church as reported by the Board of Foreign Missions for the year ending October 1, 1949, is \$252,434.17. This does not include the balance on hand, the interest earned, or the refunds entered, but only the direct contributions for the fiscal year.

a. *The Board of Foreign Missions and its Work.* From 1909 until 1936 a Board of Directors of nine members had charge of the foreign mission program of the Conference. Since then this work has been entrusted to a Board of five members. This Board, which is elected anew and for a term of three years at each Conference, organizes itself with the offices of chairman, assistant chairman, executive secretary, treasurer, and recording secretary. Since 1939 an assistant treasurer for Canada has been appointed by the Board.

The Board of Foreign Missions directs the foreign mission work of the Conference and submits to it or to the churches recommendations for the acceptance of missionaries or fields, and decides on questions concerning the sending of missionaries or the opening of new stations. From the received mission funds it provides the required appropriations for each of the missions according to an accepted budget. This Board has as a rule convened twice annually, where it arranged and provided for the several missions. At Conferences it has presented the work of the missions as a whole and has submitted recommendations for its continuation and expansion.

Loyalty to the cause of the foreign mission activities of the Conference on the part of the churches can largely be attributed to

the untiring efforts and wise guidance of brethren, who have served on the board for many years. Among the brethren who have done highly valuable work on behalf of our foreign mission efforts was N. N. Hiebert, who served as secretary of the Board until 1936; J. W. Wiens, who took care of the treasury from 1915 to 1936; and H. W. Lohrenz, who served the Board as chairman from 1919 to 1936 and as executive-secretary and treasurer from 1936 to 1945. Other brethren, who have in this period done important work as members of the Board are H. H. Flaming, H. S. Voth, J. J. Wiebe,



H. S. Voth

P. R. Lange, G. B. Huebert, A. E. Janzen, J. A. Harder, H. H. Janzen, and J. B. Toews.

At the 1924 Conference a request was presented by the China and India Missions in which they asked for a visit to these fields by a member of the Board. The matter, though unexpected, created much interest in the Conference and was referred for consideration to the churches. Since some opposition manifested itself to such a proposed visit, it was not carried out. At the 1948 Conference the question of a visit to the foreign fields by a member of the Board was again up for consideration and the Conference approved a resolution which authorized the Board to to send a

representative for a visit of the fields. The Board made the required arrangements and A. E. Janzen, the executive secretary and treasurer visited the fields in India, Africa, and South America during the time from December, 1948, to June, 1949.

The 1948 Conference in due consideration of the fact that it was fifty years since the decision was made to begin a mission in India, decided to commemorate this event by holding special mission meetings in all the congregations and to bring unto the Lord a special jubilee offering on this occasion. The intention was to use this offering for further expansion of foreign mission work. The contributions marked as jubilee offerings and sent to the Board treasurer totalled \$53,625.55.

Of special value in furthering the interest in foreign missions have been the publications put out and distributed in the churches by the Board of Foreign Missions. For some time these appeared quarterly under the name "Greetings" and contained reports of the work as well as articles on topics relating to missions. In recent years a number of booklets, giving the history of the several missions, have appeared. Large posters, having the pictures of the missionaries on the several fields, have been distributed. In 1947 a pamphlet, "Guiding Principles and Field Policies" was published, which was intended to give directions and guidance to missionaries and missionary candidates. Recently a publication by the Board entitled "Morning Light" has appeared. Deputation work done by missionaries on furlough, and their written reports, while on the field, have through the years, greatly aided the maintaining of mission interest and enhanced its intelligent support.

b. *Continuation of the Mission in Oklahoma.* The Post Oak Mission at Indianola, Oklahoma, has been continued throughout this period. For some time a fairly large number of Mexicans attended the meetings and there were also some conversions from among them. At present, however, the work is almost exclusively among the Comanche Indians. Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Becker continued in the work until 1942 when they retired, but the brother continued to assist in the work where possible. Mrs. J. Gomez was appointed as mission worker in 1936 and is still in this service. Since 1942 the following have for a short time been in charge of the work: Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dick, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Fast, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Wiebe. The present missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Gerbrandt have had charge of the work since 1945. In 1948 the Board approved the opening of a school for the Comanche children and Ruth Wiens was procured to conduct the same. At

present a school building is being erected on a plot near the town Indiahoma. Mr. and Mrs. Herman J. Neufeld joined the staff of workers in 1949.

Extension work of the Post Oak Mission was begun among the Mexicans at Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1935. Here a number of Mexicans were converted in the meetings and a chapel was built and dedicated in 1937. In 1946 the mission was shifted to the southern part of Lawton and the plant enlarged. At present the work is continued mainly to the poor and neglected whites of this area, for most of the Mexicans have left this vicinity. The 1948 statistics give the church membership for Indiahoma as 165 and for Lawton as 15. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Nickel have been in charge of the Lawton View Mission since 1947.

c. *The Mission to the Telugus in India.* The Mission to the Telugus in southern India has enjoyed further growth and expansion during this period. In 1936 the area of this mission field was substantially enlarged through the addition of the stations Mahbubnagar and Gadwal with their fields. In addition to the missionaries mentioned in preceding chapters, the following have entered the work on this field: Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wiebe, 1927; Mr. and Mrs. J. N. C. Hiebert and Margaret Suderman, 1929; Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Dick, who came from Russia via China in 1933; Catherine Reimer, 1931; Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Unruh, 1937; Anna Suderman, 1938. During World War II it was for a long time impossible to send missionaries to India. Since its close the following new missionaries have been sent to India: Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Kasper, Emma Lepp, Helen Harder, 1946; Margaret Willem, Edna Gerbes, Rozella Toews late in 1946; Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Warkentin early in 1947; Mildred Enns and Mary Duerksen late in 1947; and Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Studebaker in 1949. The M. B. Church has been represented on the India field by 46 missionaries since the beginning of the Mission and there are at present several candidates appointed and about to leave.

d. *The Two M. B. Missions in China.* The mission begun by F. J. Wiens among the Hakkas in southern China in 1911 and taken over by the Conference in 1919 has been able to maintain itself only with much difficulty and with repeated interruption. In 1927 all the missionaries had to leave the field, due to the revolution in that area. In 1929 the J. S. Dick family returned to China but could remain on the field only a short time and had to leave for the coast, due to unrest in the land. While having their residence at Swatow for some time, Bro. Dick made an extended trip

to Borneo. His favorable report brought into consideration the opening of an M. B. Mission on that island. The plan, however, did not materialize. About 1935 F. J. Wiens made another effort to reopen the mission but found it impossible to remain there for a longer period of time. The Conference in 1945 resolved to make another effort to continue the mission. Mr. and Mrs. Roland Wiens were sent to this field in 1947 and they reopened the mission and are the only workers there at present.

In 1946 the M. B. Conference began to send mission workers to West China, where it took over a field. Here H. C. Bartel of the China Mennonite Mission had begun to work in 1941, and a little later Pauline Foote came and joined in the work. The Conference has sent to this field the following workers: Mr. and Mrs. P. D. Kiehn and the sisters Bena and Emma Bartel in 1946, and Mr. and Mrs. P. P. Baltzer and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Baltzer in 1947. All of these workers, except the two Bartel sisters have since been obliged to return from the field. Due to the communistic revolution in China, the situation for missions in this land has become very grave, and calls for much intercessory prayer that God may sustain and protect His messengers, and that, if it pleases Him, He may again open the doors for the spreading of the gospel.

e. *The Conference and the M. B. Mission in Belgian Congo, Africa.* Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen, members of the M. B. Church, who had been working as missionaries in Africa since 1912, applied to the Conference in 1919 and asked to be accepted as a mission of the Conference. The Conference at that time was not ready to accept this responsibility. In 1920 the Janzens began an independent mission among the Negro tribes in the south-western part of the Belgian Congo, which was largely supported by contributions from M. B. Churches. In 1931 the African Mission Society was organized among M. B. Church members in Canada and this organization sent Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Barch to the Belgian Congo as missionaries. Then they began a mission at Bololo, 450 miles north-east of Kafumba, the station where the Janzens worked. These two missions applied to the Conference, requesting it to take over the workers as its missionaries and to take over the two fields. In 1943 the Conference assumed full responsibility for these two missions and accepted the workers on these fields as its missionaries.

The Conference has sent the following as additional workers to Africa: Kathryn Willems, Martha Hiebert (who after the death of the first Mrs. Janzen was married to A. A. Janzen), Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bushman, Anna Goertzen, Margaret Dick, Anna Enns, Mr.

and Mrs. William G. Baerg, Mr. and Mrs. John B. Kliewer, Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Kroeker, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Ratzlaff, Matilda Wall, Mary Toews, Elsie Guenther, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Esau, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Friesen, Susie Brucks, Erna Funk, and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brucks.

f. *The Conference and the M. B. Missions in South America.* The M. B. Church has directed its attention to South America in recent years and has there begun three missions. In conjunction with the Mennonite Brethren in Paraguay, a field has been taken over and a mission opened among the Indian tribes of that land. To this field the Conference has sent the missionaries Mr. and Mrs. B. P. Epp and Mr. and Mrs. Jacob H. Franz and is supporting a number of workers from the Paraguay churches.

A mission began at Curitiba in southern Brazil in 1946 when the Conference accepted Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Unruh, who began the work, as its missionaries. This mission involves mainly the maintenance of an orphanage and a school. Linda Banman was sent there as missionary for this work in 1948.

The M. B. Conference began a mission in northern Colombia, where it took over a field in 1945. To this country the Conference has sent the following missionaries: Mr. and Mrs. Daniel A. Wirsche, David Wirsche, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Dick, Annie Dick, Lydia Golbeck, Kathryn Lentzner, Lillian Schafer, Mary I. Schroeder, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Loewen, Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Bartel, and Ruth Loewen.

g. *Mission to Russians in Canada.* In 1943 the Board of Foreign Missions began to support ministerial workers in Canada, who had the command of the Russian language, and who carried on mission work among Russians in that land. Among those active in such work and for some time recognized as Conference mission workers, have been A. J. Huebert and H. H. Janzen in Ontario; G. Klassen in Winnipeg; D. A. Wiens at Arlee, Saskatchewan; Peter Schroeder at Edmonton, Alberta and later at Grand Forks, B. C., and J. G. Thieszen in Vancouver, B. C. The support of such mission work among Russians was in 1948 transferred to the Canadian Conference.

4. Educational Effort: Its Problem and Progress

The educational interests of the M. B. Church have centered very largely in Tabor College during the period under consideration. Until 1933 the school continued to operate under the management of the School Association. Several difficulties and handi-

caps the school had to contend with were in evidence. The financial support coming from the constituency was insufficient to maintain or build out the school. It was difficult to procure the required qualified teachers and to get full accreditation from the State for the work done. When in 1932 the depression set in, it became even impossible to retain the school as an accredited junior college. Since the constituency was spread over such a large area, it was very expensive for students from distant sections to come and attend the school and so the enrollment was not what it should have been.

The advisability of having the M. B. General Conference take over the college as its institution and continue to operate it was voiced in 1927. At that time the Conference was not ready to take such a step, but a plan by which the churches would contribute \$25,000.00 annually for the maintenance of the school met with some approval. The amount, however, did not come in and the school accounts for some time showed a considerable deficit.

At the Conference in the fall of 1933 this matter was again seriously discussed, and since the School Association definitely offered the whole plant to the Conference, it was decided to submit this question for a vote and decision to the churches. The result was that the Conference accepted the school and decided to continue the college as its institution of higher learning. With this step the Conference took over the college, at that time valued at \$214,000.00, as well as the responsibility for a debt of \$23,000.00. The Educational Board, elected by the Conference, was entrusted with the supervision of the school. The K. M. B. Church has since then also participated in the college and at present has one member on the Educational Board, while the M. B. Church has six.

Beginning with September, 1935 the college was conducted as a Conference School, offering instruction in the departments of junior college, Bible school, and academy. The enrollment that year reached 137. Since then the school has steadily grown: the faculty has been enlarged and strengthened; the equipment and library have been increased; further buildings, especially living quarters for students, have been added; and the number of students has increased from year to year. From 1935 to 1942 A. E. Janzen served as president and since 1942 P. E. Schellenberg has filled this office. A strong theological school has been aimed at and the brethren H. W. Lohrenz and P. R. Lange have held the position of Dean of the Theological College.

Tabor College has in recent years offered a full course in liberal arts and sciences leading to the A. B. degree. In the College of Theology the school offers courses upon the completion of which the degrees of Th. B. and D. B. are conferred upon qualified graduates. The Academy was conducted until the spring of 1949, when it was discontinued. For the school year, 1948-1949 the total enrollment was 336 students. Of these by far the majority come from the M. B. Church. During the forty-one years of its history, Tabor College has supplied the M. B. Church with many of its valuable workers—ministers, evangelists, teachers, Sunday School workers, missionaries, and others.

At the 1948 Conference the point was raised whether the Theological College should be raised to the status of a seminary, or whether the Church would wish to establish a seminary as a separate institution. A committee of nine was elected, which was to study the question and, if feasible, take steps toward the establishing of a seminary.

Numerous Bible Schools and other institutions have during this period likewise contributed valuably toward the educational needs of the M. B. Church. Since these schools are under the management of the district conference or of local churches, they will receive due consideration in later chapters.

5. Publication: Its Continuation and Extension

The publication work of the M. B. Church has continued without interruption since 1924 and has experienced some growth and extension. Since the revision of the Constitution in 1936 the publication interests of the Conference have been entrusted to a Publication Committee of five, that is, a business manager and four other members. P. H. Berg has served as business manager from 1929 until 1948 and as editor of the "Zionsbote" from 1929 to the present. A. J. Voth has been in charge as business manager since 1948.

The "Zionsbote" has continued to be the official organ of the Conference and is still printed as a weekly paper in the German language. It contains valuable articles of a devotional nature, reports from foreign and home missions, news reports from various local churches, notes on the Sunday School lessons, official reports from boards and committees, obituaries of departed persons in M. B. circles, announcements from churches, and editorials. The continuous publication of this paper for sixty five years has

not only provided the many homes of Mennonite Brethren with highly valuable Christian literature but it has also been a very important factor in keeping the Church united in its position and activities.

The "Hillsboro Vorwaerts," since 1939 having changed its name to "Hillsboro Journal," has been published by the M. B. Publishing House as a weekly local paper for Mennonite circles for the past forty-one years. It has served a definite place in the field for which it was intended and the proceeds from this weekly have aided the publication interests. This periodical is printed partly in English and partly in German.



P. H. Berg

With the change from German to English in many homes and churches and with an increasing number of young people unable to read the German, the need of publishing a church paper in the English language began to manifest itself. Upon recommendation of the 1936 Conference, the "Christian Leader" was begun as a monthly paper and continued thus until 1948, since when it was appeared twice a month. P. H. Berg served as editor for the years 1937-39, and J. W. Vogt from 1940 to the present time. This paper has made its valuable contribution to the M. B. Church in that it has acquainted the young people with the various activities of their church and that it has influenced them to participate in the church projects.

Publication of Sunday School literature and the promotion of Sunday School work is in charge of a Sunday School Committee of six members. The quarterlies with the notes on the Sunday

School Lessons are printed in English as well as in German. Material for graded lessons adapted for children of various ages is being prepared and published. All of this literature is being printed at the M. B. Publishing House and distributed. Since 1924 the following brethren have done editorial work for the Sunday School quarterlies: J. F. Duerksen, N. N. Hiebert, A. H. Unruh, H. P. Toews. A committee of three has prepared the graded lessons in recent years.

The M. B. Publishing House shows an encouraging growth during the past twenty five years. The total income for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1948 was \$36,323.69 and the financial statement for the same date gives the total value of the Publishing House as \$55,283.08. The amount of printing has increased,



A. H. Unruh

the book store has added to its stock of supplies, and the building is being enlarged.

Closely allied with the publication of the "Christian Leader" and the Sunday School Committee's work, has been that of Youth Work. Since 1936 the Conference has had a Youth Committee of five members for this purpose. This committee has been active in arranging and promoting Christian organizations in the churches and in conducting youth camps for the purpose of studying God's Word and for Christian Fellowship at various places during the summer months.

6. City Mission Work: Its Further Continuation

The South Side Mission in Minneapolis has continued throughout this period and has been under the direction of a Conference City Mission Committee of three members. Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Smith continued in charge of this mission until 1943 and were for some time assisted by Tena Dahl and Katherine Pauls. Since 1943 various workers have been engaged and have had charge for short periods. At present Mr. and Mrs. Chester Fast are stationed at the Mission.

Since 1948 the Conference has begun a mission to the Jews in Winnipeg, Canada, where Mr. and Mrs. Jacob J. Pankratz have undertaken this work.

7. The Second World War and the M. B. Church

When in September, 1939, another World War broke out, Canada immediately became involved and the United States of America also entered the war in December, 1941. The M. B. Church once more faced the question as to what stand it should take and what its duties would be. On the whole the Church found itself better prepared for such an event than in 1917, because the General Conference had continued to have a Committee on Non-Resistance during this interval between the two wars, which had from time to time distributed literature on the proper attitude of the Christian toward war. The government, too, had a better understanding of the position held by the church bodies, which for the sake of conscience and on the ground of Biblical teaching objected to participation in war.

Since the government enacted legislation requiring general military service, and since the war took on unparalleled dimensions, a large number of young men were called for service. Of the men called from the ranks of the Mennonite Brethren, a larger number entered combatant service or non-combatant service with the armed forces than in the previous war. The majority, however, refused to take up any service in connection with the military establishment. Civilian Public Service Camps were arranged for, and these young men together with others from various Mennonite bodies, were placed in these camps and were assigned to work considered to be of constructive value to the nation. Among the services permitted by the government and in which such men have been engaged were: service in mental hospitals, protection of national forests against fire, dairy farming, soil conservation, and

other agricultural projects. Care for the spiritual welfare of these men, and the financing of the camps, since these men received no remuneration from the government, became some of the larger duties of the churches. On the whole these men have behaved themselves in a commendable way; where they went they let their light shine and bore out a true witness for their Lord. When they were discharged they left with a good reputation.

With the close of the war and their discharge, these men faced the problem of rehabilitation. The Church has through its Committee tried to direct and assist them in this, in so far as possible. When the government enacted legislation which provided for general military training after the war, plans for arranging voluntary public service of a beneficial and constructive nature, were made. Such service is to take the place of the military training.

It has in recent years become more and more difficult for the M. B. Church to define its attitude toward war and to take a united stand on the question of non-resistance. At the 1948 Conference it was requested that the Church take a clear stand and that this stand be formulated by the Committee of Reference and Counsel. This committee carefully prepared and presented the fundamental principles as gathered from the sacred Scriptures under seven points. These points were discussed and adopted with some amendments by the Conference.

8. Relief Work

The M. B. Church has from its beginning been known to be active and liberal in relief work and in assisting those in need wherever possible. During the period since 1924, the General Conference has always retained a committee to direct and assist in relief effort. Since 1936 the constitution also provides for a Committee of General Welfare and Public Relations to be composed of five members, and the Conference has since then had such a committee active in this service.

Following the first World War the needs for relief were appalling and immediate action was urgent. With the coming of many Mennonites to Canada after 1923, help to these was administered in huge proportions and the relief to sufferers in Russia and in other countries was extensive and continued for a number of years. When Mennonite settlements began in Paraguay and Brazil after 1930, and these settlers found themselves in utter poverty and void of the essential implements and tools for beginning to

farm, the relief agencies assisted them to get a start in life. During the entire period to the outbreak of the second World War in 1939 some actual needs for relief were found, and the Conference through its committee, did its part.

During the second World War the needs for relief increased and the activity of the M. B. Church in alleviating the needs and the suffering likewise increased. Following the war the needs became still greater and the sphere of relief-help took on large dimensions and manifold phases. In its relief activity the M. B. Church has expressed itself in two ways: much of this work has been done by the Church through its own committee; a much larger part, however, has been done through the Mennonite Central Committee and in cooperation with it.

The lands in which the M. B. Church has had a part in relief, either directly or through the M. C. C. are Russia, Germany, Poland, Holland, England, France, the Near East, India, China, Paraguay, and Brazil. In addition to contributing funds in large amounts, clothing, wheat, canned meats, fruits and vegetables and other foods have been supplied in vast quantities. In the supervision and distribution of relief, numerous brethren and some sisters from the M. B. Church have been active.

Since with the close of the last war over 10,000 displaced Mennonites were found to be in Germany, Holland, and Denmark, their support, transportation to another land, and resettlement in their new homes, became a very important work. God graciously opened the way and made it possible that most of these could migrate either to South America or to Canada. Caring for them and assisting them with means is in many cases still necessary.

Among the many brethren, who have had a part in this service of love, several have devoted a good deal of their time and strength to help their unfortunate brethren and fellowmen. P. C. Hiebert, who has served the Conference as chairman on the committee during this entire period and who has represented the M. B. Church in the M. C. C. and served as its chairman, has made several extended trips in the interests of the work and has frequently reported on relief at Conference and in church papers. J. F. Harms has for many years rendered valuable service in remitting contributions to Russia and in negotiating the sending of many relief parcels there. M. A. Kroeker has for some time done similar work and has also served the committee as secretary. B. B. Janz, who assisted very many in Russia to procure passports and thus enabled them to come to Canada, migrated there himself in

1927. He has since taken a very active part in relief work. On a prolonged trip to South America he ministered in a valuable way to the spiritual needs of the churches there. C. N. Hiebert, who while city missionary in Winnipeg, distributed relief to newly arrived Mennonites from Russia, is now in South America for evangelistic service. C. C. Peters is rendering valuable service as teacher in a "Zentral-Schule" in Paraguay, training teachers for the colonies there. The brethren C. F. Klassen and C. A. DeFehr of Canada have likewise made extended travels to Europe and South America and have rendered valuable assistance in arranging the transportation of Mennonites from Europe to South America and Canada and in settling them. H. H. Janzen recently spent half a year



B. B. Janz

in Germany and Holland, preaching and teaching among the displaced Mennonites, and at present C. Wall is there for a similar spiritual mission.

The vast program of Mennonite relief work which encircled the globe, during the past three decades, cannot be summarized and evaluated in this brief statement. It has, however, been motivated by love and done in the name of Christ, and what has been prompted by Him, will in the day of reckoning be abundantly rewarded. The M. B. Church has sincerely endeavored to do its share, which was not small. The last published report of the treasurer as for October 2, 1947, to August 29, 1948, gives the total contributions for relief for this time as \$92,494.81. Besides this there have been many contributions not passing through the treas-

ury and large quantities of clothing, food supplies, farming implements, and other things have been sent. How much suffering has been alleviated, how many tears of gratitude have flowed, and how often those helped have thanked God and their benefactors, the Lord only knows. This program of relief work has not only been a factor in binding the M. B. Church more closely together, but it has also been a means to unite us more closely with our less fortunate brethren in other lands, and it has in many cases been a concrete witness before the world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF THE M. B. CHURCH 1910-1949

Having traced the early history of the M. B. Church in America and having surveyed the activities of the General Conference from its beginning to the present time, we now turn to the several District Conferences. These owe their beginning to the decision and to the consequent sub-division effected at the General Conference in 1909. Each of the four District Conferences is composed of a number of local M. B. Churches spread over a large area. Each has its singular history, has expressed itself in various activities, and has had a definite part in the development of the M. B. Church as a whole. We shall in this chapter study the history of the Southern District Conference.

1. The Churches Constituting the Southern District

The Southern District Conference of the M. B. Church is composed of the churches in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas and we shall briefly mention the various local churches of which the Conference is built.

a. *Churches of Kansas.* Of the earlier churches begun prior to 1909 a number have continued and have grown into strong congregations; others again have been discontinued in the course of time. The Ebenezer church in the northeastern part of Reno County continued to hold an important place for some time. Heinrich Adrian served this church as presiding minister and elder for many years after 1906 when Abr.. Schellenberg moved to California. The number of M. B. Church members in and around Buhler continued to increase and for some time the church had services here as well as in Ebenezer. A church was built in Buhler in 1908. In 1923 the Ebenezer church building was dismantled and a large one was erected in Buhler and the whole congregation began to assemble here. The Buhler church has continued to grow and at present has a membership of 514. The brethren Peter Wiens, P. R. Lange, and J. B. Toews served the church as presiding ministers for some time. Other ministers have assisted them. The present minister is J. J. Toews.

In the year 1916 a group of M. B. church members began to congregate in Inman where they procured a hall for their services. Abr. Schellenberg and G. M. Pankratz have in a special way taken care of the flock and ministered the Word to them. Later some of this group moved away and the remaining ones joined the Buhler Church, and the one in Inman was discontinued.

In Marion County the Ebenfeld Church has remained a strong one, but its membership has remained quite stationary. Many of the younger families moved to new settlements and old people retired from farming and went to town. At present the church has 241 members. At Ebenfeld the brethren, Elder Johann Foth, J. K. Hiebert, and G. W. Lohrenz have for a longer period of time served as presiding ministers. At present J. G. Baerg serves the



P. E. Nickel

church as minister. In 1924 the church building was destroyed by fire but the congregation immediately built a new one. Members of the M. B. Church have congregated at Steinreich, ten miles southeast of Ebenfeld for the past fifty years. These belonged to Ebenfeld but had their own services, except on the first Sunday of each month. About 1905 they erected their own church building, but continued to remain affiliated with Ebenfeld until 1946 when they organized into a separate church. The present membership of Steinreich is 60.

The M. B. Church of Hillsboro continued to remain a comparatively small one for nearly three decades, but since 1908, when Tabor College was established at Hillsboro, the church began

to increase and has shown a rapid growth since then. It is today the largest congregation in the Southern District, numbering 783 members. In 1910 the congregation erected a large church building, which was later enlarged even more, and in 1948-'49 a large Sunday School Annex was added to provide facilities for the educational needs of the church. The Brethren P. P. Rempel, P. E. Nickel, and J. W. Vogt have served this church as presiding ministers for many years. These were ably assisted by many other ministers, especially by brethren teaching in Tabor College. Waldo Hiebert ministers to the Hillsboro church at present.

The church at Lehigh continued as a congregation with a stable membership of about 110 for many years. Recently the number has decreased and now the church has 78 members. J. A.



H. D. Wiebe

Nickel served this church as minister for seventeen years. For several years Jac. J. Kroeker had charge of it. Since then various brethren have continued the ministry, principally the Bible teachers of Tabor College, H. F. Toews, H. D. Wiebe, and P. R. Lange.

Several smaller congregations have sprung up in Kansas. The one at Tampa began in 1912. J. B. Reh has been the minister of longest standing here. Waldo Wiebe served the church several years. In recent years theological students of Tabor College have chiefly ministered to this church. Its present membership is 65.

Although a group of M. B. Church members living in Wichita had been meeting in their homes for worship since 1931 under the direction of some of the brethren, an organized M. B. Church was not established until 1942, which has since grown to a mem-

bership of 49. A church building was purchased where they congregate. The Brethren Estil Schale, J. J. Franz, and Orlando Harms have ministered to this congregation since its organization.

Among the smaller congregations in western Kansas the one at Dorrance in Russel County has been the one longest standing, beginning in 1912. Here J. B. Reh and Peter Wiens ministered the Word for many years. Other brethren have served the church for a shorter time. The present membership of this church is 60. The liberal mission offerings this small congregation gives at its mission festivals are exemplary. At Ingalls, west of Dodge City, a prosperous M. B. congregation has grown up which now has 45 members. Here the Brethren D. W. Siemens and D. J. Wiens have ministered. Another congregation began at Ulysses, Grant County where Isaac Harms has served the church as minister for many years and still does. This congregation numbers 43 members.

Several other Kansas congregations have had a part in the activities of the Southern District Conference but have before now been discontinued. The one at Goessel flourished for many years but was discontinued in 1925 when the remaining members joined surrounding M. B. Churches and the church building was sold. Here the Brethren J. S. Foth and J. D. Reimer had a long ministry. Congregations with regular services existed also for some time at Durham and at Herington. In Hamilton County in the extreme western part of the state a settlement of M. B. Church members began about 1907 and a congregation grew up named Tabor. Due to drought it disbanded after a few years. Early Conference Year Books mention the residence of M. B. church members at Meade and also at Minneola in western Kansas. At Mingo, Thomas County in northwestern Kansas a promising congregation existed for some time. More recently a congregation began at Elk City in southeastern Kansas, but this has also been discontinued.

b. *Churches in Oklahoma.* With the opening of Oklahoma for settlement in 1892, many M. B. families from churches in other states went here, established their homes, and founded new churches. Nearly all the congregations mentioned in chapter five prospered and have continued to the present time. Several, however, did not survive. For many years the M. B. Church was more strongly represented in Oklahoma than in any other state and is at present exceeded only by California.

The earlier and larger churches of Oklahoma are located in an area stretching across the central part of the state from north to south. The first one we meet, beginning from the north, is that

of North Enid, which began in 1893 and where Peter Regier served as minister in the early years. After that the brethren J. D. Hiebert, P. P. Regier, Gerhard Voth, and Corn. Grunau have been in the ministry there for many years. These were succeeded by the Brethren J. K. Siemens, Robert Seibel, A. A. Smith and P. C. Grunau. This congregation prospered and erected a large church building. Its present membership is 132. In 1926 the M. B. membership residing within Enid realized the need of opening a church within the city. A used church building was purchased and services held regularly. The Brethren P. C. Grunau, Lando Hiebert, and J. Adrian have ministered the Word in this congregation.

At Fairview in Major County a large M. B. settlement began in 1893, which resulted in two congregations. The larger one, South Hoffnungfeld, located southeast of Fairview is the church where Elder M. M. Just had a long and fruitful ministry. He was succeeded by the Brethren F. Fruechting, A. P. Epp and J. C. Grunau as presiding ministers who were assisted by a number of other ministers. The membership of this congregation is 255. The North Hoffnungsfield congregation located north of Fairview has prospered under the ministry of J. B. Unruh, H. H. Bartel, and J. J. Martens. A. E. Jantz is the present minister. The congregation built a church in Fairview in 1949. The M. B. Church at Okeene, about twenty miles southeast of Fairview, has received much assistance from the ministers at South Hoffnungsfield. Henry Rush served as minister for many years. The present membership stands at 80.

A Mennonite settlement in which families from the M. B. Church predominated, located in Washita County, farther south, in 1893. An M. B. Church was organized, which built its church at Corn in 1894. This building was enlarged several times, but in 1918-'19 this was replaced by a very large structure. After this had served the congregation as a place of worship for thirty years, it was destroyed by fire early in 1949 and a new church building is now being erected. The M. B. Congregation at Corn has grown rapidly and has become not only the largest one in Oklahoma, but was for some time the largest local church in the entire General Conference. For a number of years the membership was over 700, recently it has decreased to some extent and at present is 635. The Brethren Abraham Richert, Isaac J. Harms, H. H. Flaming, J. J. Wiebe, and J. K. Warkentin have ably served the church as presiding ministers, some for a long period of time. Other ministers have assisted them. At present J. P. Kliever ministers to the church as leader.

The M. B. Church at Bessie, ten miles west of Corn, began in 1909 as an outgrowth of the Corn congregation. Here Jacob Reimer served as presiding minister for eleven years. He was succeeded by the ministers J. J. Kroeker, A. H. Schmidt, H. R. Wiens, and J. K. Siemens. Very recently Elmo Warkentin has taken charge of this church. The present membership of the church at Bessie is 151.

Two stable M. B. churches have been established in western Oklahoma. The one at Hooker, formerly known as the Sharon M. B. Church, begun in 1904, had Abraham Cornelsen as presiding minister for eighteen years. He was followed by H. B. Pauls, who also had a long ministry there. Several other brethren as-



H. H. Flaming

sisted in preaching of the Word in early years. In more recent years the church has been ministered to by B. C. Willems and H. H. Hiebert. The congregation enjoyed a steady growth and the church building had to be enlarged considerably. The membership is now 140.

The church at Balko, formerly more commonly called Boyd but also designated as Bethel M. B. Church, was organized in 1906. Here the Brethren G. Bartel, F. Just, and H. P. Kliever have served the church as presiding ministers over a long period of time. The membership of this congregation is 124.

In eastern Oklahoma the two M. B. Churches, Inola and Collinsville, grew out of new settlements in this area. The one at Inola began in 1911 and at first congregated in homes, but soon erected

a church building. This they unfortunately lost through fire in 1918. It was, however, replaced by a new church. In this congregation the Brethren A. F. Strauss, F. F. Strauss, D. F. Strauss, and J. W. Friesen have ministered and led the church. Its membership, which in recent years has decreased, is now 40.

The church at Collinsville began in 1913 and prospered for some time, numbering over 100 members. A substantial church building was erected in 1919. The Brethren Benjamin Wedel, G. W. Lohrenz, and J. H. Voth have served the congregation as ministers for a long time. In more recent years various brethren have served for a shorter period of time. The membership, which has decreased in recent years, is now 70.

The two mission churches, the one at Indianoma and the other at Lawton, in southern Oklahoma, both resulting from the foreign mission effort of the General Conference, are affiliated with the Southern District Conference in so far as is practical and receive spiritual assistance from the Conference.

A number of M. B. Churches in Oklahoma, that have figured in the activities of the Southern District, but which have not survived, should be mentioned. The congregation at Gotebo, began in 1902, built a church, and prospered for some time. Peter Richert, who built and maintained a hospital in Gotebo, led the church. Later most of the members moved away and services were discontinued. In 1916 a number of Baptist families of this community organized themselves as a church, united with the M. B. Conference and utilized the church building. John Geis served them as minister for some time.

The church at Medford was discontinued in 1909. A small church at Cooper or Hitchcock also disbanded after several years. In Caddo County, east of Corn, a substantial congregation began and held its own services until 1920. The group was led by Heinrich Bergthold for a number of years. One of the earlier congregations began at Lahoma, west of Enid, and continued until 1920, when the remaining members joined the Enid Church. Here Johannes Schneider led the group for many years and when he left, he was succeeded by Karl Schneider and Abr. Wiens. When in 1918 some conversions took place at Ringwood and these converts called Elder M. M. Just to come and baptize them, a small church was organized. Here D. H. Schmidt served as minister for a number of years.

c. *Colorado.* Of the M. B. congregations in Colorado, the one at Joes, formerly always given by the name Kirk, is the oldest and

is also the only one still existing. This church of the arid west, where David Dyck and H. Bergthold did valiant service during the pioneer days, has always remained small. Here the brethren Jac. G. Wiens and Abr. Heinrichs have had a long ministry. For many years the Southern District Conference regarded Joes as a home mission station and gave financial assistance for the support of the minister. Roland Wiens was stationed here for a number of years. At present this congregation numbers 51 members.

An M. B. Church, which is last mentioned in the Year Book of 1914, existed at Pueblo, for some time. Here John H. Boese led the small congregation for a number of years. The M. B. Church began at Loveland in 1905, when several families from Kirk moved there. H. Nickel, Conrad Burkhart and P. E. Penner



J. J. Wiebe

have ministered to this group. In 1924 this church numbered 37 members. Since then it declined and by 1926 had discontinued.

The M. B. Church has also had small groups of members and places of worship at Johnstown, Keensburg, Denver, and Brighton. The Conference regarded these places as mission fields and took special pains to develop churches. The brethren J. D. Reimer and David Hooge have worked in this area for some time. The strongest group was the one at Johnstown, which was an M. B. church affiliated with the Conference until 1946, but has since discontinued, the members joining other surrounding churches.

d. *Churches in Texas.* Two separate settlements of the Mennonite Brethren in western Texas resulted in congregations, but in

both cases they also were discontinued. The one at Littlefield began in 1915, grew to have a membership of 100, and for some time gave hopes of becoming a well established church. J. J. Wiebe and A. L. Schellenberg served as ministers of this church. Due to drought and crop failures, the group slowly disbanded and moved to other localities. A similar congregation began about one hundred miles further south at Coldwater in 1928, which continued for about eight years.

At Henrietta in central Texas a group of believers, formerly coming from the Volga in Russia as Baptists, affiliated themselves with the M. B. Conference in 1910, but in 1915 this church again withdrew.



P. E. Penner

A number of M. B. families, principally from Oklahoma, moved to Premont in southern Texas about 1928 and organized themselves into a church. Here H. H. Flaming served as minister for a number of years. P. E. Penner and H. Andres, who also lived in this vicinity and assisted in the ministry, began a mission among the Mexican working people on ranches. Their mission, which they continued for some time was named John Three Sixteen Mission. The Premont M. B. Church still continues and has a membership of 56. J. W. Duerksen is the present minister.

Since 1936 the Southern District Conference has conducted a Mission among Mexicans in southern Texas at the stations Los Ebanos, Chihuahua, and Grulla. These are listed among the

churches of the District, but the development of this work we shall consider later under home missions.

Beginning in 1920 a small M. B. congregation sprang up at Lake Charles, Louisiana, which continued only three years. J. P. Wall served there as minister. For several years a number of M. B. families lived in New Mexico, but this group did not materialize into an organized local church.

e. *Growth of the M. B. Church of the Southern District.* The churches of the Southern District Conference have not experienced a particularly rapid growth at any one period. On the whole there has been a constant increase, but this has been more rapid in the earlier years than later. The last nine years even show a decrease. The following table, from the Conference Year Book reports, gives the figures for decades. The membership for 1909 is a fair estimate based on prior and later figures which are incomplete:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Churches</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Ord. Minis.</i>	<i>Offer.</i>	<i>S. S. Enrol.</i>
1909	21	2100	32		
1919	28	2830	37		
1929	29	3660	50	\$ 26,976.22	3000
1939	28	4346	50	33,365.14	3399
1948	28	4260	40	339,260.09	4607
1949	28	4372	54	428,469.67	4782

The number of churches has remained rather stationary. When some discontinued, new ones began and were received into the Conference. The highest number given at any one time is 30. The number of ordained ministers shows a decided decrease in the last decade. The figures for offerings in the years prior to 1948 have probably been rather incomplete and, therefore, not too reliable.

2. The District Conference Convention: Its Organization and Development

According to the plan by which the M. B. Church was divided into districts, the churches of Kansas, Oklahoma, and California were to constitute the Southern District. The California churches, however, found the distance to the Middle-West too far and withdrew after one year and organized the Pacific District Conference. The Colorado churches, at first belonging to the Central District, soon joined the Southern District.

The Southern District Conference convened for the first time with the Ebenezer Church in Kansas, October 31 to November 1,

1910. It elected the following officers: Johann Foth, chairman; M. M. Just, assistant chairman; A. L. Schellenberg, secretary; H. W. Lohrenz, assistant secretary. The course of procedure which had been established in the General Conference sessions was followed and, according to the provisions made, the various phases of home mission work and the care of the churches were attended to. The Conference has since convened every fall and the dates were so chosen as to include a Conference Sunday for the Mission Festival.

The Lord graciously granted to this Conference a large number of able, devout, and aggressive leaders who have made valuable contributions toward its progress. The older brethren, Johann Foth, M. M. Just, Heinrich Adrian, Abr. Schellenberg, and Abr. Richert, had the spiritual welfare of the churches and the work of the Conference at heart and did much to guard against the dangers of their times. These leaders were ably assisted and soon succeeded by a number of equally consecrated and qualified men, such as H. W. Lohrenz, H. H. Flaming, P. E. Nickel, J. K. Hiebert, J. S. Foth, P. P. Rempel, J. S. Regier, P. C. Hiebert, and H. F. Toews, who have held important offices or served in various committees. To this group were soon added others who have likewise made valuable contributions toward the work of the Conference. Among these may be named J. J. Wiebe, H. D. Wiebe, A. P. Epp, P. R. Lange, J. W. Vogt, and others.

As the Conference grew in strength its sphere of activities expanded. The work of home missions, of course, occupied its chief attention and called for its greatest efforts. The need of caring for the spiritual welfare of the churches was clearly seen and early provided for. A Committee of Reference and Counsel was elected and entrusted with this charge. With the change of the times and circumstances various new problems presented themselves to the churches and sometimes difficulties as to discipline arose. This committee has assisted the churches wherever it could, and has been of definite help through its counsel.

In recent years the need for a constitution, under which the Conference could incorporate itself and by which it could do its work more effectively, was felt. A committee was elected to draft such a constitution, which it did. This constitution was then submitted to the churches for a careful study and in 1947 the Conference adopted it. The Conference was thereupon incorporated in the state of Kansas in 1948.

This Consitution, as printed in 1948, includes besides the Articles of Incorporation and the Charter given by the State, the By-Laws, which govern the procedure and work of the Conference. These By-Laws, containing thirteen articles, give a statement regarding the Confession of Faith held by the Conference, define its relation to the General Conference of the M. B. Church as well as its relation to the several local churches of which it is composed, and the requirements of membership. It further defines its organization, its conventions, and the duties of its officers, its board of trustees, and its standing committees. The Conference is now organized according to the provisions of this constitution and endeavors to function by it.

The Southern District Conference has aimed to work in close harmony with the General Conference and to support all of its activities. The different phases of General Conference work have usually been reported at the sessions of the District Conference, and these reports have been received with much interest. The foreign missions program has as a rule received very loyal support. Other phases of General Conference work have likewise received due support by the District.

3. Home Mission Work of the Conference

The effort of the Conference has mainly centered around Home Missions during its entire history. This was but natural, for a mission-minded church found doors of opportunity for such work opened on every side and was constantly confronted with its needs. The Lord has prospered the members to the extent that they were able to contribute for this purpose and has also given to the church the required workers.

a. *The Home Missions Committee.* The Conference found it most convenient to vest the direction and supervision of its home mission effort in a committee of three members. At its first convention it elected the following committee: Chairman, J. S. Foth; secretary, M. M. Just; treasurer, C. P. Regier. These three brethren served the Conference and the whole cause of missions for many years. When their part was done the Lord had others to continue this responsible work. In 1919 J. F. Duerksen succeeded M. M. Just as secretary, who in turn was succeeded by P. C. Hiebert a year later. P. E. Nickel succeeded J. S. Foth as chairman in 1921 and A. P. Epp took the place of C. P. Regier in 1924. H. D. Wiebe served the committee as secretary 1929 to 1939 and P. C. Hiebert

as chairman 1937 to 1946. Other brethren have been in the committee for a short period of time. At present the committee consists of Orlando Harms, chairman; Elmo Warkentin, secretary; and A. W. Epp, treasurer.

b. *Evangelism in the Churches.* The major portion of the home mission effort has been directed toward evangelistic work done in the churches. This was arranged for at the Conference sessions; the evangelists were procured and accepted; a program for the distribution of the work was made, so that every church received its due portion; and a budget for financing the work was accepted.

This work consisted in holding prolonged evangelistic services in a church or in some cases in a school house. The meetings were aimed at leading the unsaved to repentance and to an assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and the saved to become more fully established in their spiritual life. These services have often led to revivals and the conversion of many and they largely account for the numerical growth of the churches. Most of those won were the children of church members, but in many cases others from the communities were saved and later joined the M. B. Church.

The Lord has graciously given to the Southern District Conference a large number of evangelists and some of these have been very effective in this work. Among those engaged in Conference evangelistic work during the first two decades after 1909 were J. S. Regier, A. F. Strauss, Peter Wiens, G. M. Pankratz, Adam Ross, H. D. Wiebe, A. J. Harms, J. H. Richert, H. F. Toews, J. C. Thiesen, H. H. Stobbe, C. N. Hiebert, H. S. Voth, J. J. Wiebe, B. F. Wiens, J. H. Lohrenz, H. F. Klassen, David Strauss, J. J. Franz, J. B. Siemens, Fred Just, P. N. Hiebert, B. H. Balzer, P. V. Balzer, P. E. Penner, and M. H. Schlichting. Some of these men have devoted themselves to such work for many years, but were usually engaged in this Conference for part of their time and then served as evangelists in other districts for the rest of their time. During the last two decades a fairly large number of brethren have also served the Lord in evangelism, but most of them for a short time, and the number of available workers has steadily decreased.

c. *Itinerant Ministry for the Upholding of the Churches.* Often the work arranged for by the Conference took on the form of an itinerant ministry, corresponding more to the "Reisepredigt" of earlier days. Bible addresses and expository study of portions of Scripture were usually included in such meetings and brethren

of some maturity led them. Visitation of church members in their homes was often also included, especially in smaller churches. Among those mentioned, who were active in such ministry are Johann Foth, Abr. Schellenberg, Heinrich Adrian, M. M. Just, H. A. Neufeld, A. H. Unruh, G. P. Regehr, and N. N. Hiebert. Of the brethren who stood out in expository preaching and who helped the churches much thereby were J. S. Regier, P. P. Rempel, Wm. J. Bestvater, H. F. Toews, H. F. Klassen, and P. E. Penner. For some time interest in conducting Bible Conferences was created and several churches arranged for such conferences. These proved to be a definite help and blessing for those participating.

d. *Extension Work in Home Missions.* The Conference was early led to a phase of mission effort which has been called extension work, "Erweiterungsarbeit." In some localities, where only a few families of the M. B. church were represented or where there were none, opportunities for evangelism sometimes presented themselves. Such fields were often in new settlements, as in western Kansas, western Oklahoma, Colorado, and in Texas. Places like Henrietta, Texas, Meade and Minneola in Kansas, and Johnstown, Keensburg, Brighton, and Denver in Colorado are mentioned as places where such mission effort has been put forth. The brethren David Hooze, J. D. Reimer, J. Adrian, and R. Wiens have been stationed by the Conference in Colorado for some time. Other traveling evangelistic workers have labored in such localities. Souls have been won for Christ by such efforts, but in the building up of new congregations this work has not appeared to be very successful.

The need for doing home mission work in circles beyond our own congregations is understood by leading brethren and opportunities for it are found by those who visit localities where there are only few or no churches. Since there are many young people in definite preparation for Christian service and since the economic resources of our churches have increased, it is hoped that extension home mission work will increase.

There are, however, certain facts and tendencies with reference to home missions which may give some concern. The membership of the Conference has not increased this last decade. This may partly be accounted for by the fact that some members have moved to other district conference areas every year. It is, however, also the case that revivals have become fewer and in some churches rare. The unsaved can be induced to come to meetings only with much difficulty and conversions are fewer than in former years.

Moreover, the number of evangelists, who devote themselves fully to evangelistic work in connection with the Conference, has become very small. Many churches, especially the larger ones, have begun to call evangelists from other denominations to come and conduct revival meetings. The paramount need with reference to home missions at present appears to be a definite turning unto the Lord with a full surrender to Him and an earnest pleading for a Holy Spirit-wrought revival.

4. Mission Projects of the Conference

The Conference has begun and conducted several definite mission projects. In 1936 an open field was found among the Mexicans along the southern border of Texas. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Neufeld were stationed there the following year, which led to the opening of a mission, which has later been called the Latin American Mission of the Southern District Conference. The Neufelds established a station at Los Ebanos and began to work successfully in this field. In 1942 the Conference accepted Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Thomas for the work and they began a station at Chihuahua. Mr. and Mrs. Ruben Wedel, who were accepted as workers in 1945, found an open field at Grulla and began to work among the Mexicans of that locality. For some time the church at Premont, Texas, carried on a mission work among the Mexicans of that community. A hall for the services was procured and Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Esau are engaged for part time in this work.

The Lord has graciously blessed the efforts at all these stations. Regular services are being held at each of the places and from time to time revival meetings have been conducted. Walter Gomez has been an effective evangelist among them. At present the church membership of these stations totals 67. A number of young people attend the Rio Grande Bible Institute, an interdenominational school where they receive training for Christian service. In 1948 the Conference began its own mission school near Los Ebanos. This school, named El Faro, is attended by children from Los Ebanos, Chihuahua, and Grulla.

For some time the work in Wichita, Kansas, was of the nature of a mission project and was financially supported by the Conference. A fully organized church has by now been established, which has its own place of worship and a parsonage. Mission work among children which is supported by the Conference has been done by single sisters since 1946. This work has begun and has for some

time been conducted by Zelma Lohrenz and Elfrieda Berg. Since Miss Berg had to discontinue the work on account of illness, Luella Pankratz entered the work in 1948 and takes her place. The work consists mainly in conducting release period Bible classes in public schools, house to house visitation, child evangelism services, and the conducting of daily vacation Bible schools during the summer months. Through these efforts many children get to learn God's Word and a number have been saved.

Through daily vacation Bible School work a field was found at Marshall, Arkansas, in the Ozark mountains. Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Richert have been stationed here as workers of the Conference since 1948 and have found this to be a responsive field for the spreading of the gospel.

5. Educational Activities of the Conference

Since Tabor College, the educational institution of the General Conference is located in Kansas, the Southern District Conference has never found occasion to launch out on an educational project of its own. It has, however, warmly supported the College, has had a larger number of students attending it than any other district, and has contributed very liberally toward its financial support. At the conference sessions the reports of the school have been received with keen interest. Because Tabor College is located in its midst, the Southern Conference has benefited by the school in a special way.

The Bible School and Academy at Corn, Oklahoma, begun in 1902, has throughout this entire period made a highly valuable contribution in the educational effort of the Conference, especially in meeting the needs of the churches in Oklahoma. The school has constantly been attended by many young people and in recent years the enrollment has been over 100 students. The school offers a course of study which combines Biblical instruction with an accredited full high school course. In this school the brethren J. F. Duerksen, H. D. Wiebe, and J. J. Wiebe have rendered highly valuable service as instructors. Numerous other instructors have been engaged by the school for a shorter period of time. J. W. Vogt serves the school as principal at present.

For some time several other Oklahoma churches have had Bible Schools of their own, offering a two year elementary Bible Course with six months of instruction during the winter months each year. The Church at North Enid began such a school in 1921, which it

continued for ten years. The South Hoffnungsfeld church built a school in Fairview in 1926 in which they conducted a Bible School for some time. The Hooker M. B. Church began a Bible School in 1930, which continued for a number of years. These Bible Schools have been of definite help in preparing the young people for better service in their churches.

An increasing number of young people from the churches of the Southern District, have in recent years attended schools outside the M. B. Church, principally theological seminaries, in order to pursue advanced studies. A number of these have returned and become highly useful workers within the Conference. Others have found their sphere of activity outside the circles of the M. B. Church.

6. Work on Behalf of the Young People of the Church

The importance of caring for the young people of the church, winning them for Christ, getting the men listed in some form of Christian service, and providing for their spiritual needs has been understood by leading brethren of the Church. The Young People's Societies, "Jugendverein," begun in most of the churches in early years, have continued and have offered channels of activity to many young people. In more recent years most of the churches have in addition, organized a Christian Fellowship among the young people, which aims at providing spiritual fellowship, and which affords opportunity for a study of the Bible, prayer, and some definite service for Christ.

The Sunday School has retained its importance and has received due attention at recent conferences. It is included in the annual statistical reports and since 1942 a Sunday School and Religious Education Committee of the Conference has been functioning, which aims to promote the cause of the Sunday School. For more than forty years the churches in Kansas as well as those in Oklahoma have conducted Sunday School Conventions annually, with the purpose of creating more interest in this work and of promoting the efficiency of the Sunday Schools. These conventions have usually been combined with a mission festival, which furthered the cause of missions, and with a song festival which was often attended by very many people and which aimed at stimulating church music and choir singing.

Most of the churches have for some time combined with the Wednesday evening prayer service a program of systematic Bible

study, where classes are arranged for the children of different stages as well as for the young people. This provision for Biblical instruction has been another means for promoting the spiritual life of the younger church members and of implanting the truths of God's Word in the hearts of children. Teaching these classes as well as those in the Sunday School, affords a wonderful opportunity for a blessed ministry to many church members.

A recent innovation has been that of the Summer Youth Retreat. This was for a number of years conducted on the campus of Philips University, Enid, Oklahoma. During the last few years the Retreat has been held at Goddard, Kansas. The program offers Biblical instruction, Christian fellowship, and wholesome recreation. This gathering has in recent years been well attended and sometimes as many as four hundred have been enrolled. The program is arranged so as to have several different groups, one succeeding the other, those of college standing, the high school age, and the juniors or children below high school age.

Though more opportunities are now offered for the spiritual welfare and development of the children and young people of the church than formerly, the problems concerning them are also graver than ever before. Under present day conditions and the modern way of living in America, youth faces many subtle temptations and can easily be lured from the right path. The enlisting and holding of the young people for the church appears to be a matter of ever increasing difficulty. Its importance, however, cannot be overestimated, for the future of the church rests with Youth.

CHAPTER IX

THE CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF THE M. B. CHURCH 1910-1949

1. The Churches Constituting the Central District Conference

When the M. B. General Conference was sub-divided into districts in 1909, it was agreed that the churches in Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Manitoba, Colorado, and Oregon should constitute the Central District Conference. This arrange-



H. E. Wiens

ment was, however, soon changed; the churches in Manitoba joined the Northern Conference, those in Colorado joined the Southern, while those in Oregon soon united with the churches in California to form the Pacific District Conference. M. B. churches have since 1909 sprung up in Michigan and Montana, so that the Central District Conference is now composed of sixteen churches in the six states Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, and Montana.

a. *The Churches in Minnesota.* The early M. B. church in Minnesota, at that time named Bingham Lake, has, as we have seen, undergone some changes and has resulted in the formation

and organization of the two churches, Mountain Lake and Carson. The two churches remained united as one local church organization until recent years, and they have even to the present a very close relationship and many things in common. The church in Mountain Lake has grown rapidly, has built a substantial church edifice, and is at present the largest congregation in the Central Conference, having a membership of 281. The brethren N. N. Hiebert, and H. E. Wiens served here as presiding ministers for many years and were assisted by a number of other ministers. At present Dan Friesen serves the church as minister.

The church of Carson, which has recently erected its church building in the small town of Delft, is largely the successor of the congregation formerly known as the Bingham Lake country church.



J. J. Kliewer

Since the leaving of Elder Heinrich Voth for Canada in 1918, the brethren H. S. Voth, A. J. Wiebe, B. J. Braun and others have served as presiding ministers. At present Wm. Neufeld ministers to this congregation, which has 158 members.

The two M. B. Churches in Minnesota have been noted for the keen interest shown in foreign missions, for the large number of missionaries and church workers coming from their ranks and for the liberal contributions they have made to missions. A special mission festival aimed to interest especially the young people in this work, is held by the two churches each year on the fourth of July.

These two churches have always had a close connection with the South Side Mission in Minneapolis, operated by the General

Conference. They have assisted with material goods, have done extensive manual labor in the building of the Mission Hall, and have also rendered valuable spiritual assistance. The Mission has frequently been listed in the year books of the Central District Conference as one of its stations and at times numerous members of our M. B. constituency resided in Minneapolis and received spiritual care from the Conference.

b. *The Churches in Nebraska.* Among the M. B. Churches in Nebraska the one at Henderson has continued to be the largest in the state and one of the most important ones in the Central District Conference. In 1926 the congregation dismantled its church building in the country and erected a large and imposing church building in the town of Henderson. The brethren J. J.



Gerh. Wiens

Kliwer, Gerhard Wiens, John Abrahams, David Hooge, B. B. Fadenrecht, H. B. Kliwer, and H. E. Wiens have ably served this church as ministers. The church has not grown in membership, which is due to the fact that many of the younger families constantly left and moved west to newer settlements. The present membership is 214.

Of the smaller M. B. churches south of Henderson, the one at Eldorado has been the stronger one and is at present the only one in this locality still having meetings. Its membership has, however, dwindled down to ten. The brethren John Deines and Eli Cook have led this group. The small congregations at Sutton and Hastings were discontinued many years ago.

At Jansen, in southeastern Nebraska, a congregation which had for some time a membership of one hundred flourished for a long time under the able and devoted leadership of Isaac Wall. In 1917-'18 a number of families moved to western Nebraska and the church became very small. Several years later others residing in this community joined the group and a fair number were added through baptism, so that a promising church continued for some time. At present only two families of the M. B. Church remain here. The ministerial brethren Adam Ross, G. H. Jantzen, P. V. Balzer, and Waldo Hiebert have shepherded this flock after the leaving of Isaac Wall.

In western Nebraska the congregation at Culbertson continued, but has remained small and at present has only 15 mem-



Isaac Wall

bers. Here Adam Ross, David Hooge, R. C. Seibel, A. A. Loewen, and Karl Dick have ministered. At present Raymond Laird has charge and conducts the services.

At Paxton, nearly one hundred miles northwest of Culbertson, an M. B. congregation began as a new settlement and was organized into a church in 1919. Though this church has remained small, it has been very active and aggressive and has shown a keen interest in missions. Here the brethren H. C. Flaming, John K. Siemens, G. H. Jantzen, D. M. Doerksen, and B. C. Willems have served as ministers. At present Henry Hooge ministers to this church which numbers 81 members.

c. *The M. B. Church in South Dakota.* In the Mennonite community in the southeastern part of South Dakota were scattered groups of the Mennonite Brethren in 1910. These were then congregating for services at Carpenter, Parker and Dolton. The one at Dolton, which has later been more commonly called Silver Lake, has continued as an organized M. B. Church to the present and now has a membership of 123. Here the Brethren Peter Fast and J. J. Adrian have ministered and led the church for many years. For some time Wm. J. Bestvater, P. N. Hiebert, and M. A. Kroeker have assisted in preaching. G. S. Warkentin is the present minister.

At Carpenter, where a group of 33 members congregated in 1910, H. A. Neufeld served them as minister for several years, after which the members moved to other localities and services were discontinued. At Parker a small group which was led by Peter Adrian maintained itself as a congregation for some time. Heinrich Voth of Minnesota has taken special pains to minister to these small groups and to assist them in their organization.

d. *The Churches in North Dakota.* In North Dakota in 1910, there were seven stations with M. B. churches all of which were small and most of them have remained so. The one at Munich, which is also called Rosehill, is in the north-central part of the state and has for a long time had a membership of about 80. At present it numbers 74. The brethren Johann Enns, Johann Guenther, and B. B. Fadenrecht served the church as ministers for many years, and David Hooge for six years. At present G. W. Schroeder serves this congregation as minister.

Among a group of M. B. Churches in the central part of North Dakota, the one at Harvey has grown to be the largest one, having a membership of 191. With the growth of the congregation the church building was enlarged from time to time and at present there is a fine spacious building for the services. After Christian Reimche had served the church as minister for thirty eight years, Peter Wiens ministered to it for a number of years. He was succeeded by the following, who remained with the church a shorter period—L. J. Seibel, H. H. Hiebert, and the present minister, Gerhard Warkentin.

At McClusky, forty miles southwest of Harvey, several families of the Mennonite Brethren settled, in 1900 and began to assemble for services. In 1905 a church which was named Westheim was built in the country. A short time later several families moved into the town McClusky and meetings were begun there also. Here a church was built in 1914 and in several years the group grew

into a church of over one hundred members. Ludwig Seibel, an ordained minister, served the country congregation at Westheim until this was dissolved and after that the one in McClusky for twenty seven years. He was succeeded by Gotthilf Winter, who had charge for a number of years. Other ministers who have served the church for short periods of time are, Peter Wiens, John Siemens, David Fast, Herman D. Wiebe, LaVern Loewens, G. W. Schroeder. In recent years the membership has decreased until now it is only 23.

Two small congregations began south of McClusky. The one at John's Lake, which was formerly known as Johannestal, began in 1910 and built a church in 1916. Here George Sattler led the group for many years. At present it numbers 17 members. The other congregation was that of Stark, which has been discontinued. There were members of the M. B. Church at Goodrich and at Tuttle for some time and services were conducted, but no organized churches developed.

An M. B. Church congregation now known as the Sawyer M. B. Church, began in the country south of Sawyer and Velva. This was organized in 1909 and Chr. Reimche of Harvey ministered to it in early years. A church was built in 1909, which was replaced by a new one in 1924. This again was remodeled and enlarged in 1947. For some time there were two congregations, each having its own services and place of worship. Later the two groups united and now form one organized local church of 92 members. D. J. Gerbrandt, J. F. Thiessen and Gustav Faul have ministered to the church.

e. *Churches in Michigan.* The M. B. Church had its beginning in Michigan in 1906, when a number of families from Corn, Oklahoma, moved to Nolan in the north central part of the state. At first a Sunday School was conducted, then preaching services were begun, and in 1907 a church was organized, with H. F. Janzen as minister. Later P. E. Penner succeeded him. When the members began to move away the church decreased and in 1919 was discontinued.

An M. B. Church began at Gladwin, seven miles south of Nolan in 1914, when a group of German Baptists asked to join the M. B. Conference. Through the assistance of Elder H. Voth of Minnesota a local church of which P. E. Penner became the first minister was organized. He was later succeeded by Ewald Roloff and D. F. Strauss. This church, numbering 56 members in 1924, continued longer than the one at Nolan, but was finally dissolved. Several members belonging to this congregation lived at Comins.

In 1923 about twenty members of the M. B. Church lived in Detroit. These began to gather for Sunday School and for services. Since they were without a minister D. F. Strauss visited them as he could and conducted the services. Later a number of them left the city and the services were discontinued.

f. *The Churches in Montana.* The M. B. Church began in Montana in 1916 and it has since then been represented in a number of localities in the northern part of the state. At present, however, there are congregations at three places only. At Lustre, where the largest group is found, a church was organized in 1917 and a church building was erected in 1923. J. F. Thiessen, the first presiding minister, served the church for twenty-six years. He was



J. F. Thiessen

for many years assisted by the ministerial brethren J. J. Toews and A. A. Dick. From 1944 to 1949 Arthur Flaming was the minister. The membership, which in recent years has decreased, now numbers 98.

At Volt, about fifteen miles east of Lustre, an organized church having sixty members began in 1917. The congregation constructed a basement for a church in 1918 and has held its services therein since then. The Volt congregation which has been affiliated with the Lustre church has been largely served by ministers from there. Its present membership is 26.

A number of M. B. families settled at Larslan, twenty miles northwest of Lustre in 1917, and began to congregate for worship. Since this group is small, it has also remained affiliated

with the church at Lustre and has been served by ministers from there, though a local brother leads the meetings when they are without a minister. A basement for a church was constructed in 1929 in which the services are still held. Since 1945 a local church has been organized and has for some time been served by Carl Dick as minister. The present membership is 29.

An M. B. Church was established at Chinook, two hundred miles west of the Lustre settlement, in 1916. The congregation erected its own building and for some time flourished. When later several years of drought came, these settlers moved away and the church was dissolved. For a short time a small congregation maintained itself at Whitefish in western Montana. At Hydro a small group lived and had serices, but this soon discontinued, and at Poplar in eastern Montana a small group lived and held its services, but these also left.

g. *Growth of the M. B. Church in the Central District.* The M. B. Church of the Central District Conference area has had only a gradual growth since the Conference was organized in 1910 as is shown by the following statistics:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Churches</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Ord. Minis.</i>	<i>Offer.</i>	<i>S. S. Enrol.</i>
1909	19	970	20		
1919	22	1264	21		
1929	19	1405	26		
1939	17	1497	29	\$ 19,071.70	2049
1949	16	1472	27	185,305.92	1711

2. The District Conference: Its Beginning and Its Development

When the General Conference agreed to sub-divide into districts in 1909, it made provisions for the continuation of home mission work in each of the district areas. On October 17-18, 1910 the Central District Conference convened at Bingham Lake, Minnesota, for the first time. Seventeen churches were represented with 48 delegates. The Conference organized with Heinrich Voth as chairman, J. J. Kliewer as assistant and P. H. Neufeld and Wm. J. Bestvater as secretaries. A home mission committee was elected and all the required provisions for the conference and for the continuation of its work were made.

Since 1910 the Conference has convened for its regular sessions annually, except in 1918, when, because of the influenza epidemic, only the home mission committee met and made the most

essential arrangements for the continuation of this work. These conferences have been well attended, have been a strong uniting factor of the churches, and have induced to greater united effort in various activities.

The Lord has graciously given to this Conference able and consecrated leaders, who have had the welfare of the M. B. Church at heart and who have rendered valuable service to the same. During the first decade the brethren H. Voth, J. J. Kliewer, Isaac Wall, Chr. Reimche, L. Seibel, have taken a leading part in launching the Conference forth into its various phases of work. These men were soon followed by brethren like G. Wiens, J. Abrahams, H. S. Voth, N. N. Hiebert, Abr. J. Wiebe, G. P. Regehr, B. B. Fadenrecht, J. F. Thiessen, and A. A. Dick, who have likewise filled important places of leadership. Since 1920 other brethren joined them and rendered to the conference valuable service for many years. Among these may be mentioned H. E. Wiens, J. K. Siemens, D. Hooge, A. Ross, G. H. Jantzen, and B. J. Braun. In the more recent years the Lord has supplied still other workers, so that the conference in its activities could progress and increase.

In its relation to the General Conference the Central District Conference has been loyal and has done its part faithfully. During its sessions the various phases of General Conference work have received due consideration and support. The foreign mission program especially found in the Central District its strongest supporters and the most liberal financial contributors. Since the South Side City Mission at Minneapolis was located in this district, the Conference felt a special obligation toward it and has done much toward its support.

3. The Home Mission Work of the Conference

Conference activities of the Central District have mainly centered around its various phases of home mission work. The direction and supervision of this work was from the beginning entrusted to a Home Mission Committee of three members. At the 1910 Conference the following were elected into this committee: Isaac Wall, chairman; John Abrahams, secretary; J. C. Dick, treasurer; these three brethren ably served the Conference in this capacity for a number of years. In 1916 A. J. Wiebe succeeded Isaac Wall as chairman; in 1919 P. H. Balzer was elected to be treasurer; and in 1924 A. A. Dick became secretary. These three brethren likewise rendered a great service to the Conference. Other brethren, including G. Winter, J. H. Ewert, and J. J. Adrian have later served

for a shorter time on the committee. The present Home Mission Committee is composed of B. C. Willems, chairman; G. S. Warkentin, secretary; and Adam Feil, treasurer.

At the conference sessions the committee reports and surveys the whole field of home mission efforts, the evangelists and other workers report of the work they have done, the Conference plans for the continuation and expansion of the work and adopts a budget for the financial support of the work. The contributions for home missions have constantly increased. At the 1910 Conference the amount was \$1936.93; for the year 1948 the total contributed was \$10,935.42.

Evangelism in the churches, that is, the holding of prolonged evangelistic meetings in all the congregations, has been the main type of home mission work the conference has occupied itself with. At the conference the evangelists were appointed and a plan for their itinerary was made, and the home missions committee directed the work during the year. This evangelistic work has resulted in many revivals in the churches and in the conversion of many of the unsaved and has largely accounted for the increase of membership in the churches.

The Conference has until recent years been well supplied with evangelists and the number of those who have during the past four decades been active in this work is large. Among those who have done more extensive evangelistic work in the earlier years are the brethren, J. S. Regier, J. H. Ewert, H. F. Klassen, H. A. Neufeld, H. S. Voth, W. J. Bestvater, Adam Ross, J. J. Franz, C. N. Hiebert, B. F. Wiens, D. F. Strauss, P. E. Penner, J. F. Thiessen, H. D. Wiebe, H. H. Stobbe, J. J. Wiebe. A little later other evangelists entered the field of service and have been active in the Conference. Among these are D. Hooge, J. H. Lohrenz, P. V. Balzer, J. A. Wiebe, J. N. C. Hiebert, E. Roloff, J. K. Siemens, G. H. Jantzen, R. C. Seibel, J. B. Siemens, Sam Hiebert, H. S. Rempel. P. R. Lange, Harry Neufeld, and others.

A work closely related to that of evangelism has been that of travelling ministers, mostly older brethren, who have given expository Bible addresses in the churches. Among the workers the Conference has used for this purpose have been Heinrich Voth, H. A. Neufeld, G. P. Regehr, N. N. Hiebert, Abr. H. Unruh, Gerhard Unruh, and J. F. Thiessen. This type of ministry has been of special value in establishing the church members more fully in a knowledge of God's Word.

The Conference has also done extension mission work, where doors for this work opened. During the first two years, when the Oregon churches were reckoned with this Conference, Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Voth were stationed there for some time. Shortly before the division into district conferences, the General Conference had begun its mission work among the Russians in Saskatchewan and North Dakota. After its organization, the Central District Conference felt that this field, as far as North Dakota was concerned, should not be neglected and so it continued evangelistic work among Russians in this state for some time. In 1913 the Conference convened with the Russian M. B. Church at Kief, North Dakota. After the Conference had continued this work for some time the congregation at Kief united with Russian M. B. Churches in Saskatchewan and formed their own conference. Recently the brethren from the Russians at Kief have turned more to the use of the English language and have in 1947 again joined the Central District Conference as a local church. This congregation has at present 40 members.

Since 1927 the Conference has given some financial support to Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wiens, who had begun a mission in the neglected areas around Mildred in northern Minnesota, and is now regarding this mission as a Conference project in extension work. Sarah Balzer has for many years assisted in this work and has been considered a conference worker. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Unrau have for some time worked as missionaries among the Indians at Ponemah in northern Minnesota. In 1949 the Conference opened a mission in the Indian reservation of Pine Ridge in southwestern South Dakota and stationed Mr. and Mrs. Unrau there. During the years 1935-1940, when the large dam at Fort Peck, Montana, was constructed, numerous members of the Mennonite Brethren went there for work, so meetings were begun for them and extension work where souls were converted was also done for others. This work was largely sponsored by the churches in Montana.

4. Other Activities of the Central District Conference

Though the several phases of home mission work just mentioned constitute the chief efforts of the Conference, several other forms of activity have also received their due attention. In Education the Conference has during its entire history supported Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, has with sympathetic interest received the reports of the school, and has regarded the institution

as the one representing the M. B. Church. There have always been a number of young people from this conference area attending Tabor College. A number of students have, however, also attended other schools like Northwestern Bible School, Minneapolis, and Grace Bible Institute, Omaha. Several smaller Bible schools of an elementary nature and aimed at meeting local needs have been conducted by several churches, in most cases in conjunction with other Mennonite bodies. Among such schools have been the Preparatory and Bible School in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, a Bible School at Munich, North Dakota, a Bible School and Academy at Lustre, Montana, which is now developing into a church high school, and for some time a Bible School at Madrid, Nebraska. Advance in education has been very noticeable in the Conference during the past three decades.

In recent years special efforts have been made to provide for the spiritual needs of the young people and of the children in the churches. The work of the Sunday Schools shows a steady and continuous advance. In nearly all of the churches a Young People's Society, "Jugendverein," is functioning, and in several of them Christian Fellowship organizations have been functioning for some time. During the recent war, when many of the young men were called to the service of their country and when most of them were engaged in C. P. S. Camps, the churches devoted a good deal of attention to their care. Youth retreats have been conducted for several years in different areas; those from Minnesota and South Dakota united to form one camp, those in North Dakota another, and those in Montana still another. In some cases these Youth Retreats were arranged and conducted together with other church bodies.

The present outlook for the Conference is hopeful. There is an active ministry which endeavors to do its best for the churches. The Conference, however, does not show a numerical growth during the past decade. This may largely be attributed to the fact that members have steadily moved into other districts, especially from the arid regions of the West. The churches, nevertheless, appear very active, and manifest a strong mission spirit.

CHAPTER X

THE PACIFIC DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF THE M. B. CHURCH 1910-1949

No provision was made for a Pacific District Conference, when in 1909 the General Conference of the M. B. Church divided its constituency into district conferences. The churches which were in California at that time were assigned to the Southern District, and those in Oregon to the Central District. In the fall of 1911 the California churches requested dismissal from the Southern Conference with the privilege to organize themselves into a District Conference of their own. This request was granted and the organization was effected that fall. Two years later the Oregon churches withdrew from the Central District and joined with the California churches to form the Pacific District Conference. Since then the M. B. Church has increased and expanded along the West Coast. From 1916 to 1926 the Church was represented in Idaho and in more recent years it has spread to Washington. The Pacific District Conference of the M. B. Church at present, therefore, represents all the congregations in California, Oregon, and Washington.

1. The Churches Constituting the Pacific District

a. *The Churches of the San Joaquin Valley, California.* The first place in California where the M. B. Church made its appearance was at Reedley, where several families settled in 1904. Very soon a church was organized, which grew rapidly and by 1912 numbered 205 members. D. T. Enns was the first leader of the church. He was soon followed by Abraham Buhler, an ordained minister, who served the church a number of years. In 1908 a church building which soon proved to be too small for the rapidly growing congregation was erected, and was enlarged in 1912. In 1919 this was taken down and a large church edifice, 60 by 98 feet, with a complete basement, was built. This building has served the congregation very well for many years, but has recently become too small. The congregation has, therefore, planned to build a new house of worship and intends to use the present build-

ing for church-school purposes. The Reedley church drafted its own constitution in 1920 and incorporated itself. After the retirement of Abr. Buhler the following brethren have served the church as presiding ministers—John Berg, D. C. Eitzen, G. B. Huebert, and J. B. Toews. The congregation has at all times had a number of other ministers in its midst, who have greatly assisted in the preaching of the Word and in the care of the church. The present membership is 1166 and this church is at present the largest one of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.

In April, 1925, a number of M. B. Church members began to assemble for worship services and organized themselves as the South Reedley M. B. Church. A spacious hall was procured for



John Berg

the meetings and J. H. Richert served this congregation as minister for many years. In 1937 this congregation procured a building site in Dinuba and at first built a large Sunday School hall, in which it conducted its services for two years. In 1939 a large church with full basement and an auditorium, seating over one thousand people, was built. Other ministers besides J. H. Richert, who have served this church are John Berg, J. J. Hiebert, J. P. Siemens, and B. J. Braun. The congregation has continued to increase and now has 555 members.

Several families of the M. B. Church coming from the Midwest settled around Fairmead and Madera, about thirty miles north of Fresno. These were soon joined by a number of families immigrating from Russia. The group then began to congregate

for worship and C. Wittenberg served them as leading minister for a number of years. In 1919 they were duly organized as a church with P. Wall as leader. For some time J. M. Schlichting also served in the ministry. At present Ben Wall, an ordained minister, leads the church. The congregation, known as the Madera M. B. Church, had 68 members in 1924, but has since then decreased and at present numbers only 23.

Members of the M. B. Church, who moved into the city of Fresno, began to assemble for worship in 1920, but services were for a long time confined mainly to Sunday School. An organized



G. B. Huebert

church was effected in June, 1942, with 34 members. After renting a hall for services for many years, the congregation purchased a building site in 1946 and erected a spacious church building with an annex hall. Since 1944 the congregation has grown rapidly and has at present 175 members. Presiding ministers, who have served the church are J. D. Hofer, Sam Wiens, S. W. Goossen, and H. G. Wiens.

b. *The Churches in Southern California.* Three M. B. Churches have grown up in the area of Bakersfield. The one in the city of Bakersfield is largely the outgrowth of city mission effort. The congregation began with a Sunday School in 1910 and the early

members were mostly those who came from congregations in Kansas and Oklahoma, Peter Richert organized the group into a church and became its first minister. In 1913 Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Friesen heeded a call to come and shepherd this church and they have ministered here nineteen years. They combined this work with a city mission and an extension Sunday School. In 1916 a building lot was purchased at 1230 Monterey Street in the eastern part of the city and a hall was moved to this site and renovated into a suitable church building. After the Friesens left P. N. Hiebert and Henry Hooze have been ministers of the church. The membership of the congregation has steadily grown and at present is 186 and is composed of businessmen, laborers, and farmers.



J. H. Richert

In 1909 a number of M. B. families settled at Laredo, north of Bakersfield. These, having been disappointed in the purchase of their land and finding it impossible to make their living here, moved to other places, many to Rosedale west of Bakersfield. Here an M. B. Church began, which has had a steady growth and now numbers 159 members. This congregation, at first finding itself in utter poverty, held its meetings in a school house to begin with. Later it moved the abandoned church building which was at Laredo into this community and used it for its services. The brethren who have served as ministers to this hard stricken congregation and who have thus become instrumental in making of it an aggressive mission-minded church, were J. H. Bese, H. Kohfeld,

J. B. Unruh, F. H. Nickel, J. Berg, J. D. Hofer, S. W. Goossen, and H. D. Wiebe. The present minister is W. L. Penner.

The M. B. Church at Shafter, twenty miles north of Bakersfield, dates back to 1916, when the first members settled there. In 1918 a church was organized with P. P. Rempel as presiding minister. The congregation grew rapidly, and in 1918 a large tabernacle was built in which the meetings were held. This was replaced by a fine church building in 1937. The congregation, which has experienced an encouraging growth, numbers at present 405 members. Ministers who have been in charge of the church after Bro. Rempel left, are Herman Janzen, K. G. Neufeld, W. J. Bestvater, H. D. Wiebe, J. J. Toews, and W. C. Wiebe, the present minister.

Members of the M. B. Church have resided in Los Angeles since 1920. Some of these were working people who sought employment; others were students and came to attend the Bible Institute of Los Angeles or other schools. In 1923 several meetings were arranged for at the Bible Institute and arrangements for regular services were made. P. P. Rempel was chosen as leader. Later a hall was rented for the services and an established congregation gradually materialized. A site for a church was purchased in 1936 at 8109 So. Hoover St., and the following year an adequate building was erected. The congregation, though much scattered over the large city, has grown and at present numbers 137 members. Ministers who have served the church besides P. P. Rempel are Jacob Isaac, Sam Wiens, and P. N. Hiebert.

One of the first M. B. Churches in California was that at Escondido, one hundred miles south of Los Angeles. Here Elder Abr. Schellenberg and a number of other M. B. families settled in 1907 and established a church which continued about fifteen years, when the members again moved to other places.

c. *The Churches in Central California.* Among the M. B. churches in Central California the one at Lodi, near Stockton, is the oldest. The first families that settled here came from Harvey, North Dakota, in 1908. John Berg of Reedley visited this group and assisted them in organizing a Sunday School. For some time they congregated in a rented hall, but in 1914 a church was built. P. P. Rempel moved here at this time and was chosen as minister of the church. After his departure the brethren J. H. Richert, J. M. Schlichting, Christian Reimche, G. Warkentin, A. A. Smith, and H. D. Wiebe have served the church, and the present minister is H. H. Epp. In 1924 the congregation erected a substantial church build-

ing which it still uses. The membership has been as high as 130, but in recent years it has decreased and is at present 91.

Members of the M. B. Church began to reside in the vicinity of Livingston and Winton in 1922 and soon organized themselves into a church. In the early year books this church is usually called Livingston, but the church building, which was constructed in 1925, is now in Winton and the church at present goes by this name. J. M. Enns, A. G. Sawatzky, and A. P. Koop have ministered to this congregation. The present membership is 48.

In 1922 a number of M. B. families from Dallas, Oregon, settled in the area between Orland and Chico, about one hundred miles north of Sacramento. The following year they organized themselves into a church and a year later erected a church building ten miles northeast of Orland. The brethren John P. Siemens and K. K. Willems have served this church as presiding ministers for many years. At present Dan E. Goertzen ministers to the church, which now has 113 members.

The M. B. Church in San Jose was organized in 1940 and has been a rapidly growing church since then, numbering at present 244 members. A church building was purchased, located at 217 Delmas Ave., where they congregate. A new site for a church building has recently been purchased and the congregation is in process of building a larger edifice. The ministers D. J. Gerbrandt, J. J. Gerbrandt, Arthur Nickel, and J. K. Warkentin have served this church.

d. *The Churches in Oregon and Washington.* An M. B. congregation began in the vicinity of Dallas, Oregon, as early as 1891. Heinrich Voth from Minnesota visited this group, helped with the organization of a church and baptized some of the first members. Later most of the members joined the German Baptists and the congregation was discontinued for some time. In 1904 others of the M. B. Church moved into this community and some of the former ones returned to the M. B. Church. A church building was erected at Salt Creek, six miles north of Dallas, and the congregation gathered here and flourished until 1923. The brethren Jacob Toews, H. S. Voth, Johann Enns, D. D. Bartel, and Abr. Buhler served in this church as presiding ministers.

Meanwhile a number of M. B. families moved into the city of Dallas and some lived nearby. A hall was therefore procured and services were begun also in Dallas. A separate church was organized and a building was erected in 1919. More and more of the members from the country church joined the one in town and in

1923 the remaining ones were received and the North Dallas church ceased to be. The first church building of the congregation in Dallas, located on the corner of Washington and Hayter Streets, was replaced by the present one in 1934. The brethren who have ministered to this church are: D. A. Peters, G. G. Wiens, P. H. Berg, Abr. Buhler, P. E. Penner, F. F. Friesen, Herman D. Wiebe, F. F. Wall, N. N. Hiebert, J. J. Toews, Henry Hooge, and G. H. Jantzen. The present membership is 302.

An M. B. Church began in the city of Portland in the early nineties. This remained small and was discontinued as a congregation in 1937. Here H. Reisbich and Peter Heinrich have



F. F. Wall

ministered many years. The mission in Portland will be referred to later.

Members of the M. B. Church lived in Salem as early as 1935. Here N. N. Hiebert resided a number of years. He organized the group into a church and ministered to them. An adequate church building was later erected in West Salem and the congregation is growing rapidly. A. A. Loewen served as minister for eight years. The present minister is A. H. Fadenrecht.

The M. B. Church at Blaine, in the northwestern part of the state of Washington, was organized in 1937, having 23 members at that time. It has since then prospered and grown to have a membership of 149. The small assembly hall in which the church began to congregate was in 1949 replaced by an adequate church

building. Leading ministers have been N. N. Hiebert, P. H. Karber, and J. W. Fast, who serves the church at present.

e. *Growth of the M. B. Church in the Pacific District.* The M. B. Church has grown more rapidly in the Pacific District since 1910 than it has in the other two districts of the United States. This growth is mainly to be accounted for by the fact that so many families from the Middle West moved into this area, but it can also in part be attributed to the continuous and aggressive home mission efforts of the Church. The following table by decades gives the statistics. For 1909 this is a careful estimate based upon previous and later figures in year books. The other figures are taken from the year books of the respective years.

Year	Churches	Membership	Ord. Minis.
1909	5	250	8
1919	9	903	15
1929	12	1727	17
1939	12	2704	31
1948	16	3942	54
1949	17	4138	54

2. The District Conference: Its Organization and Development

The first step toward organizing the M. B. churches of the Pacific Coast into a district conference was taken on November 20, 1911. Representatives from the California churches met on that date at Rosedale and agreed to organize as a District Conference. The meeting elected as officers Abr. Schellenberg, chairman, Abr. Buhler, assistant chairman, and H. Kohfeld, secretary. In the discussion it was decided to approach the Southern District Conference and inform it that they desired to be a separate Conference. Provisions were made for home mission work and a Home Mission Committee was elected composed of the following: Chairman, Abr. Buhler, secretary, Jacob Hiebert, treasurer, D. T. Enns. Johann Berg was appointed to work as evangelist among the churches, and the brethren Abr. Schellenberg and Abr. Buhler were asked to visit the churches and hold meetings. A willingness to receive the M. B. Churches in Oregon into the Conference was expressed. This meeting may be regarded as the first convention of the M. B. Pacific District Conference. No year book was printed, but the minutes were published in the *Zionsbote*, December, 1911.

The second Conference was held at Reedley, October 14 and 15, 1912, and was preceded by a festival Sunday attended by one

thousand people. The six California churches, Escondido, Bakersfield, Rosedale, Reedley, Fairmead and Lodi were represented with forty-four delegates. John Berg presided as chairman and Peter Richert served as secretary. The field of home missions was surveyed and arrangements for the continuation of the work were made. The Conference has since convened annually with fair representations from the churches, except in 1927 when only three representatives from each of the churches met for a short session and arranged the most urgent matters, and the Conference due in 1928 was delayed until January, 1929. In 1913 the churches in Oregon with their representative delegates were received by the Conference.

These annual gatherings for Conferences have been of great importance to the church in that they keep it united in doctrinal position and for Christian activities. Keen interest has been shown and the number of those attending has increased from year to year. The Conference has purchased a tent large enough to accommodate all those who attend, and the churches willingly invite the Conference and serve as host. A mission festival Sunday, which in early years sometimes also included a Sunday School Convention and a Song Festival, is always the high mark on the conference program.

Like the other district conferences the Pacific Conference has also had a number of able and devout men who have had a leading part in the work of the Conference and who have made a valuable and lasting contribution to the welfare of the church.. Among the earlier leading brethren should be mentioned Abr. Buhler, Joh. Berg, Peter Richert, P. P. Rempel, D. D. Bartel, J. H. Richert, B. J. Friesen, and F. F. Wall. As the years passed by and the older brethren were called to their heavenly reward, the Lord always had new workers who stepped into the line and ably went forward. The brethren D. C. Eitzen, G. B. Huebert, J. D. Hofer, H. D. Wiebe, P. N. Hiebert and others have done a highly valuable work in the Conference. More recently still others have come to shoulder duties of grave responsibility. The Lord has truly blessed this conference with many competent workers.

As the Conference grew in size its activities also increased in the same proportions and the organization was accordingly extended to meet the new needs. At first there was only a Home Mission Committee. After some years a Committee of Reference and Counsel was chosen, the duty of which is to care for the spiritual welfare of the churches and to assist them in the solution of any difficult problems. The present organization also provides

for an Executive Committee, composed of the officers; for a Joint Committee for Home Missions, composed of the three departments, Evangelism, City Mission, and Extension Work; a Sunday School Committee; a Committee for the Home of the Aged; a Board of Education for the supervision of the Bible Institute; a Tent Committee; and a Service Men's Committee.

3. Home Mission Work of the Conference

a. The Conference and Home Missions. The Conference from its beginning realized the importance of home mission work and began with it according to the plan that had been pursued by the General Conference until 1909. At its first convention the Conference elected the following three brethren as a Home Mission Committee: Abraham Buhler, chairman; J. J. Hiebert, secretary; and D. T. Enns, treasurer; and the Conference entrusted the direction of this work to their charge. These three men have served the Conference in this capacity a good while, especially Bro. Enns. Other brethren who have been elected to the Committee and who have likewise rendered valuable service during the course of the years are—B. J. Friesen, D. C. Eitzen, P. P. Rempel, K. G. Neufeld, J. J. Warkentin, A. J. Neufeld, P. N. Hiebert, J. S. Dick, H. D. Wiebe, J. D. Hofer, P. E. Nickel.

In recent years the Conference has, with the expansion of its home mission activities, also enlarged its committee, so as to form a composite Home Mission Board. In this Board are included the three departments with a committee for each;—home missions or evangelism in the churches, city missions, and extension work. Each department has a committee of three members and out of these nine a joint Committee of five members is chosen as an executive Home Mission committee. Each of the three committees is organized; has its own treasury and budget and does the work in its sphere. In matters pertaining to the work in general the three committees meet and take care of it or authorize the Joint Committee to do this.

There appears to have been a constant increase in the amounts contributed for the support for Home Missions. In 1912 the contributions for home missions was \$253.30; in 1948 the total for all the phases of home mission work was \$28,648.13. A very encouraging indication is the fact that a large number of young people are active in this form of service for the Lord and others are in preparation.

b. *Evangelism and Itinerary Ministry in the Churches.* Home mission effort in the earliest years was mainly confined to holding prolonged evangelistic services in the churches. This was but natural, for the churches were small and young and limited financially. There was also a special need for this type of evangelism in the new settlements. Thus the growth of the churches in earlier years can largely be attributed to the aggressive evangelistic efforts in the same.

Of the many brethren who have been engaged in the evangelistic work of the Conference and whose names appear repeatedly in the reports of the year books as successful evangelistic workers are—J. H. Richert, H. F. Klassen, P. E. Penner, C. N. Hiebert, H. S. Voth, G. B. Huebert, F. F. Friesen, J. D. Hofer, P. R. Lange, F. F. Wall, W. J. Bestvater, Harry Neufeld, J. J. Gerbrandt, David Hooge, B. J. Braun, J. N. C. Hiebert, J. N. Willems, A. N. Willems, H. D. Wiebe, J. B. Toews, R. C. Seibel, A. P. Koop, A. A. Loewen. It is to be noted that in recent years the number of brethren devoting themselves fully to evangelism for a longer period of time is much smaller than formerly. A change has come in that the selection of evangelists has begun to be left more to the local church and not so much to the Conference. It is also in evidence that the number of evangelistic workers coming from circles outside the M. B. Church is increasing.

A special phase of itinerating ministry, done more by brethren of some maturity with good knowledge of the Scriptures, and aimed at building up the churches through nurture in God's Word, deserves to be mentioned. The following ministers have done valuable work of this type in the Conference: Heinrich A. Neufeld, Jacob W. Reimer, Abr. H. Unruh, N. N. Hiebert, H. W. Lohrenz, Herman A. Neufeld, John Berg. A number of foreign missionaries have after their return from the field been engaged by the Conference for work. Among these are F. J. Wiens, J. S. Dick, J. H. Pankratz, and J. H. Voth.

c. *City Missions in the District.* The M. B. Churches of the Pacific District are probably more city-minded than those of other districts. A larger percentage of the members than that of the churches in the Middle West reside in cities. Nearly all the churches are located in cities or in fairly large towns. It is but natural that city mission work would then also receive more attention.

The earliest M. B. city mission on the West Coast was that at Portland, Oregon. Even before the beginning of the District Conference, the General Conference regarded Oregon as a mission

field, sent workers there, and stationed Mr. and Mrs. P. C. Hiebert in Portland for one year, and Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Voth they assigned to the whole Oregon field for several years. The Pacific District Conference has also regarded Portland as a mission for some time and after the local church in the city was discontinued, conducted a city mission there for a number of years. A number of ministerial brethren have worked there for short periods. Mrs. B. F. Wiens, a returned missionary from China, has done mission work in Portland for a number of years, being supported by the Conference. Later Mrs. Wiens went to Salem, Oregon, where she continued mission work, especially in the field of child evangelism, house to house visitation, and release period Bible teaching in public schools.

The work in Bakersfield was at first regarded as a city mission and was sponsored as such at the 1912 Conference by Peter Richert. After Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Friesen came to this city and took charge in 1913, the Conference continued to support the work in part and regarded this as its city mission project. An extension Sunday School was conducted in the eastern part of the city for many years. With the growth of the local church the financial support by the Conference was diminished and gradually discontinued. At present the local church maintains an extension Sunday School.

Since 1930 Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Friesen have carried on the City Terrace Mission at 3806 White Side Ave., Los Angeles. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Friesen have ably assisted them in the work, and Mrs. Elizabeth Neufeld-Wall, formerly a missionary to India, also helped in this mission for many years. The work was begun by Bro. Friesen upon his own initiative, but as it continued and the Lord's blessings were in evidence, the Conference began to give financial support to the mission. At present the mission is under direction of the Home Mission Committee and a regular budget provides the required funds. A new and adequate chapel was built and dedicated in 1942.

For a number of years Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Warkentin have conducted "Your Neighborhood Chapel," a city mission in Pasadena, California. Sunday School and worship services are held there and the Lord blesses the work. This Mission is not a project of the Conference, but has its approval.

d. *Extension Mission Work.* The conditions along the West Coast of our land have presented many needy fields and numerous splendid opportunities for extension mission service. During the

early years many localities among the pioneer settlers were found where no church was represented and no services conducted. Later with the rapid influx of a diverse population many opportunities for Christian work were found. There were needy fields calling for the Gospel among Japanese, Chinese, Spaniards, Mexicans, Filipinos, Russians, Armenians and other races. At numerous places there were open doors for services among workers on ranches and in the migrant camps.

Extension mission work has been done by the M. B. Church of the Pacific District from the beginning. In the earlier years this work was confined mainly to communities more akin to them and at the smaller stations which were without ministers where the German language could be used. Later the efforts passed beyond these bounds and extended to other localities and to other peoples, taking on considerable dimensions. Some of this work has been arranged for and directed by the Conference; much of it has been done under the direction of some local church; while still other work has had a spontaneous beginning with some individuals.

In 1915 work in Idaho was begun by the Conference and John Berg was sent there to conduct meetings and to survey the field. For about ten years this work was continued, and a small M. B. congregation existed at Aberdeen for a number of years. Meetings were conducted there and at several other places. Lodi is mentioned in the 1918 annual report as a suitable field for extension work. In 1926 opportunities and needs for work among Russians was discussed at the Conference, and it is reported that J. P. Rogalsky has done some work among them.

After 1930 more extensive work was undertaken, which largely originated with local churches. Workers from the Reedley church conducted a Sunday School among Japanese children for a number of years. Later this church began a mission at Navelencia, where J. J. Gerbrandt and other members did active service for some time. More recently similar work has been done at Hanford, Selma, Malaga, and Parlier. Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Harnis and young people of the Dinuba church have for many years conducted a mission with a flourishing Sunday School at Tagus Ranch. Members of the Los Angeles Church have for a long time conducted gospel meetings in the large jails of the city, visited hospitals, and assisted in various city missions. At Fresno, where Elsie Friesen has been employed for such service for a number of years, successful work has been done at numerous centers. The Pacific Bible In-

stitute had had an important part in this work. The teachers, Rosella Thiessen and Adolf B. Ensz and many students have had a very active part in what is known as "His Jewels Bible Classes." At Lodi, workers have for some time held regular meetings at the State Hospital and in the jail in Stockton. Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Smith have recently begun a promising mission at Victor, near Lodi. The Bakersfield M. B. Church has built a Gospel Chapel on Edison Highway, near the city, and workers from the church carry on a Sunday School and Wednesday night services there. The Shafter church conducts two extension Sunday Schools. Other churches, like Rosedale, San Jose, Orland, Dallas, and West Salem report extension Sunday Schools, the conducting of Bible classes, jail meetings and other forms of gospel work. In 1948 \$4,504.71 was paid out for extension mission work.

4. Educational Activities in the Pacific District

Interest in education and in the promotion and support of schools has gradually increased in the Pacific District Conference as the churches grew in strength. The young people of the churches have availed themselves of the many educational opportunities in ever increasing numbers.

Tabor College, the General Conference school, has at all times had warm supporters in this district and their number has constantly increased. Numerous young people from this district have attended this college; for 1948-'49 there were 35 students in Tabor. The financial support for Tabor College has also been forthcoming from this district amounting to \$6,486.17 in 1948. A fairly large number of M. B. students have through the course of years attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, with the view of preparing for definite Christian service. Others have attended various colleges, universities, and theological seminaries for advanced study. Several educational projects which deserve mention have materialized within the Pacific District Conference.

a. *The Immanuel Bible School and Academy at Reedley.* A School association, "Schul-Verein," was organized at Reedley in 1927 with the intention of establishing a community Bible School. The school was begun that fall and continued for a number of years, with J. P. Rogalsky serving as principal and other instructors assisting him. The school was strongly patronized by the South Reedley M. B. Church and when this congregation erected its own building in Dinuba, in 1937, the Bible School was also

transferred there. In 1939 the Reedley M. B. Church began its own Bible School and continued it for two years.

In 1941 the two M. B. Churches, Reedley and Dinuba, and the Zion K. M. B. Church near Dinuba, decided to establish a Bible School and Academy in Reedley, which should offer Biblical instruction as well as a full high school course. Such a school with each of the three churches represented on the board of directors, was begun in fall 1941, having 41 students the first year. Since then the school has constantly grown and now offers together with the Bible instruction, a full high school course, which has received state accreditation. The brethren P. F. Wall, J. N. C. Hiebert, and H. R. Wiens have served the school as principals. The enrollment for 1947-'48 was 176. For five years the school was conducted on the premises of the M. B. church in Reedley, but in 1946 a site for a school campus was purchased and a large and well equipped school building was erected. This institution now bears the name Immanuel Bible School and Academy.

b. *The Pacific Bible Institute at Fresno.* The need for a Bible Institute which would serve all the churches of the Pacific District Conference had been expressed by brethren for some time. At the 1942 Conference the matter was discussed and several resolutions submitted by the Educational Committee gained acceptance. The following year the question of opening a Bible Institute was discussed still further and the proposals of the Educational committee were accepted with the stipulation that the final decision should be made by the churches.

Since the proposal to begin a Bible Institute in Fresno in the fall of 1944 met wide general approval in the churches, the committee went ahead and opened the school on September 18, 1944. A large residence in the city of Fresno was purchased, which was for some time used for housing the Institute. The enrollment during the first year reached that of 35 students. In 1945 a large three-story building at 2149 Tuolumne Street was purchased and arranged as administration building and class rooms. The school has been located there since February, 1946.

During the first two years S. W. Goossen served the Pacific Bible Institute as acting president. He was assisted by five other instructors on the teaching staff. In 1946-'47 G. B. Huebert filled the place of administrator of the school and was assisted by W. L. Penner, as dean. In 1947 G. W. Peters was selected by the Board of Education as president and he has filled this position since then.

The Bible Institute is supervised by a Board of Education of nine members. Of these, eight come from the M. B. Church and are elected by the District Conference, and one represents the K. M. B. Church. A field secretary is engaged who contacts the churches on behalf of the Institute and solicits funds for its support. J. P. Siemens has filled this post since 1947.

The Bible Institute offers at present the following courses: Bible Institute Diploma Course, Bachelor of Sacred Music Course, Pre-Theological Course in Religious Education, and the Theological Course. The strength of the faculty is being increased from year to year and the student enrollment has likewise grown, numbering 145 students in the fall of 1948. Contributions from the churches for the support of the Institute for the year ending October, 1948, totalled \$21,625.77 and the total fixed assets of this institution are valued at \$87,463.17

c. *Other Schools of the Pacific District.* Several other schools have played a role in the educational effort of the Pacific District Conference. These have been conducted either by some local church or by a church in cooperation with other church bodies. The Shafter church had its own Bible School for several years, offering four months of instruction during the winter. Other churches have at times had similar Bible Schools for shorter terms. The church at Dallas, together with the local E. M. B. congregation, began a Bible School in 1936 with N. N. Hiebert and H. H. Dick as teachers. This school, which was continued for several years, offered a two-year course of instruction of four months each year. Since 1945 the two Oregon churches, Dallas and West Salem, participate with other evangelical churches in building and conducting Salem College and Academy at Salem.

5. Provisions in the Interests of the Young People of the Church

The leaders of the Pacific Conference as well as many other brethren have from the beginning realized the importance of caring for the young people of the church and of providing for their spiritual welfare. All the congregations have had a Sunday School from the beginning, and some of them have even been the outgrowth of a Sunday School. Definite progress in the conducting of the Sunday Schools is noticeable. Most of the churches have provided more adequate facilities for holding the Sunday Schools; they have either arranged a basement or have erected a separate building for this purpose. Graded lessons for primary and junior

classes are used, and in larger churches the Sunday School is divided into the respective departments. The percentage of Sunday School attendance in proportion to church membership has increased in recent years.

In the earlier years a Sunday School Convention as well as a Song Festival were held in connection with the annual Conference. Since 1938 separate Sunday School Conventions are conducted and a well-attended song festival takes place each year. The Conference cooperates with the Sunday School Committee of the General Conference, but also has its own Sunday School Committee to work in the interests of its Sunday Schools.

Nearly all the churches have had their Christian Endeavor Society for Young People, "Jugendverein," for many years. These societies have been an important contributing factor in building up the spiritual life of the young people and in keeping them attached to the church and loyal to Christ.

In recent years nearly all the churches have organized Christian Fellowships for their young people. Most of the churches have Bible classes on Wednesday night or on some other evening during the week, where children and young people pursue regular and systematic Bible study. Youth Retreat Camps during the summer months, have been instituted, which aim at leading the unsaved children who attend to an acceptance of Christ as Savior, and which are intended to lead the saved young people into deeper spiritual life and to a full consecration to definite service for their Master.

During the recent World War when many young men were called up for the service of their country and entered C. P. S. Camps, arrangements were made to hold services in these camps and to take care of the spiritual needs of these men.

6. Provision for the Care of the Aged and the Sick

For some time the need for providing a Home for the Aged was agitated at the Conference. A committee of three was elected in 1938 which was to investigate the needs for such a home. After this committee had worked with the matter several years it could at last report at the 1942 Conference that a large house had been purchased in Reedley and that it had been dedicated as a Home for the Aged and was open to receive aged church members who needed special care. Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Jost were procured to take the superintendency of the Home until now. In 1948 a new

and larger Home was built which was legally incorporated. This has practically always been filled to capacity since it was completed. A committee of five members, elected by the Conference, supervises this institution. The present committee is composed of H. R. Martens, Solomon Bartel, Ben Wall, G. J. Siemens, J. D. Enns.

At times the need of a mental hospital has been pointed out and for several years the Conference had an appointed committee which was to study the problem and to see if the establishing of such an institution was possible. This plan, however, did not come to fruition. Through the mediation of the M. C. C. and under its direction, steps were taken in 1948 to establish a mental hospital for the several Mennonite bodies represented along the Pacific Coast. A desirable plot of ground for this hospital was purchased near Reedley, contributions from the churches have been solicited, and the construction of a mental hospital has begun.

7. The Pacific District Conference in Its Relation to the M. B. General Conference

The Pacific District Conference has sought to cooperate fully in all the activities of the M. B. General Conference and to remain in close relation with it. In 1921, in 1936, and in 1945 the General Conference convened in this district. When the Conference was held in one of the other districts the churches of the West Coast have usually been well represented. The several phases of General Conference work have, as a rule, been reported of at the District Conference sessions and have received a sympathetic hearing and a warm support. In foreign missions the Pacific District has shouldered its part, contributing in 1948 for foreign missions \$43,-260.42. The statistics compiled for this year show that there are 26 missionaries from this Conference on M. B. mission fields and eleven on fields of other missions. For relief work the Conference has also contributed extensively; the amount for 1948 was \$61,-132.99. In other phases of General Conference activities the Pacific Conference has likewise borne its share.

CHAPTER XI

THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH 1910-1924

In Chapter V we have seen how the Mennonite Brethren Church made its first mission efforts in Canada in 1884 and how this led to the formation of the first M. B. congregation at Winkler, Manitoba, in 1888. It was also mentioned in that chapter that M. B. churches began in the area west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and that churches began at Herbert in Southern Saskatchewan in 1905. The Mennonite Brethren Church has since that time had its most rapid growth as well as its greatest expansion in Canada.

When the M. B. General Conference made provision for district conferences in 1909, it arranged for a Northern District. This district at that time included only the churches in Saskatchewan. The one church in Manitoba later joined this district, and after that all the M. B. Churches in Canada have united with this Conference. This Conference was at first named the Northern District Conference. Later it was more commonly called the Canadian District Conference. Recently it has received the official name, Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

The year 1924 obviously forms a natural division in the history of the Canadian M. B. Church in several respects. We shall, therefore, consider its history from 1910 to 1924 in this chapter, and the history from 1924 to 1949 in the following chapter. In treating the history of the M. B. Church in Canada it is essential that we take note of the many local churches of which the Conference is composed; that we bear in mind the conference organization as a whole; that we consider the various activities, institutions, and events in their relation to the Conference; and that we see the M. B. Church in Canada as an integral part of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America and of other countries.

1. The M. B. Churches in Canada Prior to 1924

a. *Churches of the Rosthern Circuit, Saskatchewan.* A group of M. B. churches began in the area west of Rosthern in central

Saskatchewan, to which the name "Rosthern Kreis" has been commonly given. The first of these was the one located in the vicinity of what is today known as Laird. Here a number of M. B. families settled in 1892. Jacob B. Wiens a minister from Kansas, moved into this locality and organized the group into a church and served them as minister for many years. This country church was at first named, "Ebenfeld." When the church building was later moved into Laird, the congregation was named after the town. J. B. Fischer, the present minister, has served the church for many years. The congregation has 57 members.

Beginning with 1898, more Mennonite settlers came and settled in the area west of Laird. A group of the Brethren, coming mainly



David Dyck

from Minnesota, established the congregation Bruderfeld and built a church in 1900. After a number of brethren had led the congregation for short terms, Elder David Dyck moved into this community in 1910 and received the leadership. The following year a larger church building was constructed and the congregation continued to grow. After the retirement of Elder Dyck, H. A. Willms served the church as presiding minister for many years. The present membership of Bruderfeld is 91. Since a number of families of this congregation lived in and near the town of Waldheim, east of Bruderfeld, these built a church in Waldheim in 1918 and formed a separate congregation. David Dyck moved into this town and served them as minister for some time. After his retirement the brethren J. T. Ediger, G. A. Willms, and J. H. Janzen ministered

to this church. The congregation had an encouraging growth and at present numbers 121 members.

As the Mennonite settlement continued to spread to the south of Bruderfeld, a number of M. B. families settled in the vicinity of Hepburn from 1906 to 1910, and in 1910 about twenty families organized themselves into the Hepburn church. This congregaotion grew rapidly and in 1918 numbered over 250 members. It has for a long time been the largest one in Saskatchewan. In recent years the membership has declined and is now only 222. The brethren who have ministered to this church in early years were P. J. Friesen and P. J. Nickel. Later D. P. Esau, J. B. Toews, F. J. Berg, J. P. Dick, J. H. Epp and others have served the church.



Jacob Lepp

At Dalmeny, south of Hepburn, members of the M. B. church settled in 1901-'02. They constructed a small church building in 1902 and began to congregate. Abraham Buhler, an ordained minister who had come from Minnesota, became the first presiding minister. He was assisted by Jacob Lepp, who later became his successor and who ministered the Word to the church about forty years. Other brethren who have served in the ministry are John Buhler, C. J. Kliewer, H. Nickel, J. G. Thiessen and H. J. Baerg. An adequate house of worship was later erected and the membership has constantly grown so that the church now numbers 246 members, it being at present the largest M. B. congregation in Saskatchewan.

Several families settled on farms southwest of Dalmeny in 1903 and as a result a small congregation materialized, which received the name Neu Hoffnung. This group remained small, but continued to have services for many years. Recently it has been discontinued. Johann H. Peters ministered there during the entire time.

Members of the M. B. Church began to settle at Borden on the west side of the North Saskatchewan River in 1904. A congregation was soon established and a church was built. This congregation chose the name, Hoffnungsfeld, but is more commonly called Borden. David H. Klassen, a minister, moved here and served the church from 1906 to 1919. He was succeeded by Johann A. Harder, who came from Kansas and who led the church many years. Other brethren who have served in the ministry are Jacob



H. A. Neufeld

J. Wiens, and Jacob A. Nickel. The membership was about one hundred for a long time, but has recently decreased and is now 54.

An M. B. congregation began at Aberdeen northeast of Saskatoon in 1904 when members, who settled here, began to assemble for worship. In 1906 they organized as a church and three years later erected a church building. Ministers who have served this church are Gerhard Sawatzky, John P. Siemens, H. G. Sawatzky, B. L. Sawatzky, H. W. Niessen, and G. K. Sawatzky. The membership, which has recently decreased, is now 54.

b. *Churches of the Herbert Circuit, Saskatchewan.* A group of M. B. Churches to which the name "Herbert Kreis" was applied began in the area around Herbert in southern Saskatchewan after 1905. Of the pioneer settlers to whom these churches owe their beginning, some came from the United States, others directly

from Russia, and still others from Manitoba. The local church in Herbert was organized in 1905 with Jacob J. Martens as minister. As the congregation increased in numbers a spacious church was built. For a number of years the membership was over two hundred. In recent times the number has decreased and is now 167. Ministers who have served in this church for a length of time are J. W. Thiessen, H. A. Neufeld, John P. Wiebe, W. J. Bestvater, F. Janzen, Isaac P. Regehr, H. A. Regehr, J. M. Neufeld.

The congregation, which was destined to be the largest one in South Saskatchewan and to play a leading part in the circuit, was the one at Main Centre, fifteen miles north of Herbert. The first settlers of this community arrived in the spring of 1904.



Benj. Janz

Benjamin Janz, an ordained minister, was among them and he immediately gathered the brethren for worship and services. A church was organized which immediately grew rapidly. This congregation adopted the name Bethel, but it has usually been called after the town, Main Centre. A church was built in 1907, which was later replaced by a larger one. Ministers who have assisted or succeeded Benjamin Janz in this church are John P. Wiebe, Jacob J. Martens, J. H. Ewert, H. P. Janz, Klas Ewert, Abr. Rempel, J. F. Redekop, John D. Goertzen, John Siemens, and N. P. Janz. J. A. Martens, a deacon, led the church for many years. The membership has at times been as high as 250, but now it is only 211. A small group, affiliated with Main Centre at Lichtfeld, has for many years had its own services. Klas Ewert has led this group for the greater part of the time.

The church Bethania at Turnhill, eight miles west of Main Centre, was established in 1913 with Johann W. Neufeld as presiding minister. A school house was purchased and enlarged and arranged for a house of worship. This congregation, which numbered about eighty members for many years, now has only 43. After the leaving of Johann W. Neufeld the brethren H. P. Neufeld and John J. Kroeker have served as ministers. At present P. J. Martens leads the church. The Ebenezer M. B. Church, farther south of Bethania and near Rush Lake, was organized about the same time and continued many years. Later it was dissolved and the church building was sold. Franz Janzen ministered to this church many years.

The M. B. Church at Greenfarm, eight miles south of Herbert, was organized in 1912. Jacob W. Thiessen was the first minister and served the congregation a long time. George Penner leads the church at present and Jac. J. Thiessen preaches the Word. The membership, which has in recent years decreased, is now 56.

The Gnadenau M. B. Church, often called Flowing Well, is located fifteen miles southeast of Morse. It was organized in 1908, and Johann F. Harms, who had moved there from Kansas, was the first minister. He was followed by S. L. Hodel, who ministered to the church many years. Isaac J. Toews and John E. Prieb have likewise preached the Word for some time and at present William Buller serves the church. This congregation, which has for many years been very active, erected an adequate church building in 1913. Recently its membership has decreased until it is now 34.

Ten miles south of Gnadenau the M. B. Church, Elim, near Kelstern, was organized in 1910 with Peter Penner as presiding minister. Other brethren who have served this congregation in the ministry or as leaders are Jacob Mueller, Gustav Ewert, Paul Koop, Jacob J. Knelsen, and Abr. G. Redekopp. A church building was constructed in 1918. The present membership is 62.

The Woodrow M. B. Church, seventy five miles due south of Herbert was organized in 1910 with George Reimche who led the church many years as its first minister. Other brethren who have served in the ministry or led the church are John Ollenberger, Ludwig Seibel, E. J. Lautermilch, and Samuel Sutter. The membership is 61. In early years the name Hoffnungsfeld was chosen by the congregation, but later the name Woodrow became attached to it.

An M. B. congregation which was included in the Herbert circuit began at Fox Valley in western Saskatchewan in 1914. This, however, remained small and after several years was disbanded. John J. Kroeker ministered there for some time.

c. *Early Churches in Manitoba.* The M. B. Church at Winkler, Manitoba, is the first one in Canada. It owes its beginning to the mission efforts of the M. B. General Conference, in which the brethren David Dyck, Heinrich Voth, and P. H. Wedel were especially active in holding evangelistic services. God in His mercy blessed these efforts so that souls were saved and in 1886 the first converts were baptized. The same year Gerhard Wiebe, a minister, immigrated from Russia and settled in this locality. He soon received charge of the care of this small group. The membership increased and in 1889 a small church building was erected in the village Burwalde, near Winkler.

David Dyck, who had been repeatedly urged by the Conference to go to Manitoba and devote himself to the ministry and to evangelism there, at last found it possible to move there in 1895. He travelled with his wife and small children by wagon the whole way from Kirk, Colorado, to Winkler, Manitoba. Elder Dyck now received the leadership of the church and devoted himself to it for eleven years. The congregation continued to grow. In 1898 the church building was moved to Winkler, but it was soon replaced by a larger one. This also became too small and later had to be enlarged.

When David Dyck moved to Saskatchewan in 1906, John Warkentin, who had served as his assistant for ten years, became his successor. Warkentin has been the presiding minister of the church for twenty five years. H. S. Voth became his successor in 1931 and has served to the present. Other brethren who have rendered a blessed ministry to this church are P. H. Neufeld, A. H. Unruh, J. G. Wiens, A. A. Kroeker, G. D. Pries, and H. H. Redekop.

This congregation continued to grow constantly and was until 1929 the largest M. B. congregation in Canada. In 1895 the membership was 84; by 1924 it had grown to 324; at present it is 375. In 1947 a suitable building site was procured and a church edifice 60' by 102', seating 1200 people, was erected.

The Winkler M. B. Church has been the mother-church of two affiliated branch churches. The one at Grossweide, east of Winkler, was organized in 1896 for holding separate services. A meeting house was built and, since the congregation continued to grow, it was replaced by a larger one. Later this group was established as a fully organized church. Its membership has by now reached 138. Jacob Heide served here as minister from 1925 to 1944. At present John J. Neufeld ministers to the Grossweide church. Another

affiliated branch church of Winkler was that at Kronsgart, north-west of Winkler. Here services began in a school house in 1897 and a Sunday School was organized. Later an appropriate church building was erected and after a number of years a duly organized church was established, which now numbers 72 members. J. B. Penner has served the church as minister for many years. The present minister is A. A. Heide.

d. *Growth of the M. B. Church in Canada from 1910 to 1924.* Most of the churches have had an encouraging growth during this period. Statistics of membership prior to 1914 are incomplete in the year books. Those given for 1914, for 1918, and 1924 give the number of churches, of members and of ordained ministers as follows:



Joh. Warkentin

<i>Year</i>	<i>North Sask.</i>	<i>South Sask.</i>	<i>Manitoba</i>	<i>B. C.</i>	<i>Total</i>
1914					
Churches	9	9	2		20
Members	685	467	235		1387
Ministers	12	10	3		25
1918					
Churches	9	9	2	1	21
Members	764	558	278	40	1590
Ministers	12	12	2	2	28
1924					
Churches	8	10	2		20
Members	837	535	391		1763
Ministers	16	8	7		31

2. The Canadian District Conference of the M. B. Church

Having briefly mentioned the local churches which had their beginning prior to 1924, we shall now consider their organization into an M. B. District Conference and their united efforts and activities from 1910 to 1924.

a. *The Conference and its Organization.* The Northern District Conference convened for the first time at Herbert, Saskatchewan, June 27 and 28, 1910. A mission Festival Sunday preceded the conference sessions. For this festival the large tent was filled and the heavenly Father bestowed His blessings in abundance. For the conference deliberations thirteen Saskatchewan churches were represented with sixty five delegates. The Conference organized itself with David Dyck, chairman; Benjamin Janz, assistant; and John F. Harms, secretary. During the business sessions the home mission work in the provinces was the main topic for discussion and the required arrangements for continuing the same were made. Other matters concerning the churches were, however, also considered and the various phases of General Conference work received their due attention.

The Conference has convened annually since 1910, always meeting in summer. In 1913 Manitoba joined this Conference. The order usually followed for holding the Conference was that of having it one year in the Herbert circuit, the next year in the Rosthern circuit, and the third year in the Manitoba circuit. The attendance at conference was large from the beginning and continued to increase with the growth of the churches. On the mission festival Sunday there were sometimes over two thousand people present. Often a song festival which was well attended was combined with the Conference, for the churches in Canada took a keen interest in promoting church music. With the increase of the number of churches and their growth, the number of delegates representing them increased in proportion and the program of conference activity expanded accordingly.

The Lord graciously gave to the M. B. Churches in Canada for this time a large number of highly spiritual brethren, men of prayer who had the welfare of the churches at heart, and who led wisely in the midst of the many problems of those pioneer days. Among these brethren were a number of outstanding leaders who contributed valuably to the work of the Conference. David Dyck took especial pains in caring for the churches in the Rosthern circuit, and in the work of the Conference he had a prominent part,

usually serving as chairman during the first fifteen years. David K. Klassen and Jacob Lepp of the same circuit have likewise done valiant service in the churches and in the Conference. In the Herbert circuit Benjamin Janz, J. W. Thiessen, John F. Harms, and H. A. Neufeld have had a leading part in matters pertaining to the churches, as well as in the activities of the Conference. In Manitoba Johann Warkentin was the outstanding leader of the church and a strong representative in conference work.

3. Home Mission Activities of the Conference

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada has found a field which is unlimited in opportunities for home mission work. Lead-



Jac. W. Thiessen

ing brethren have from the beginning realized the importance of bringing the Gospel to people of their own land and have stressed this work at Conference. At the conference sessions home missions had the chief place in the deliberations. The contributions for this work steadily increased, being \$1134.46 in 1910 and \$2239.-50 in 1924.

The direction and supervision of the Conference home mission effort was entrusted to a Home Mission Committee of three members. At the first conference in 1910 the following brethren were elected into this committee and they have served the Conference in this capacity for many years: David Harms, chairman; J. W. Thiessen, secretary; and H. A. Thiessen, treasurer.

The Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church 187

a. *Evangelism in the Churches.* The provision and arrangement for holding evangelistic meetings in all the local churches constituted a prominent part of the home mission effort. When the Conference convened, the required workers were appointed, a program of work was adopted, and a budget for financing the work was accepted. The brethren who have done extensive evangelistic work in the Canadian M. B. Churches prior to 1924 are C. N. Hiebert, J. B. Wiens, J. H. Ewert, H. A. Neufeld, J. J. Kroeker, C. J. Kliewer, H. F. Klassen, H. P. Janz, H. H. Nickel, A. J. Harms, H. S. Voth, W. J. Bestvater, H. S. Rempel, P. V. Balzer.

A number of elderly ministers have also traveled extensively and have strengthened the churches through their itinerary ministry. Among these were David Dyck, David K. Klassen, Jacob Lepp



Joh. P. Wiebe

in the Rosthern circuit and J. W. Thiessen, John P. Wiebe, and H. A. Neufeld in the Herbert circuit. Their ministry consisted largely in the expounding and teaching of Scripture in the churches and in visiting the homes of the members.

Evangelistic work in the churches bore its valuable fruits. Not only were the members strengthened and enriched in their spiritual life through the preaching and teaching of God's Word, but often revivals broke out and these led to the salvation of many unsaved persons in the various communities. Continuous home mission effort of this type largely accounts for the rapid growth of the churches during this period.

b. *Extension Work in Home Missions.* Opportunities and needs for evangelistic work outside of the circles of the M. B. congregations presented themselves to the Conference, and the brethren felt that God was calling them for services beyond the borders of their own church. Among the Mennonites who had come to Canada during the seventies, there were several rather backward groups, coming from the Chortitz colony in Russia. These gave little or no evidence of spiritual life, and in their services their leaders offered very little in the form of Gospel preaching. Some of the brethren felt that they owed it to God and to them to bear a witness of the saving grace in Christ in their midst. The evangelists C. N. Hiebert, J. H. Ewert, and H. S. Rempel have taken special pains to reach such communities with the Gospel. Often they combined their house to house visitation with colportage work, selling to them chiefly Bibles and New Testaments. The Lord blessed their efforts in the salvation of souls in many cases.

The mission work undertaken by the M. B. General Conference among the Russians in Saskatchewan was after 1910 continued by the Northern District Conference. Here was a needy and responsive field among the Dukhobors, Ukrainians and Galicians. The two churches, Petrofka and Eagle Creek, which had already begun among them, were more fully established and organized. Herman Fast, who had been working among these people for many years, continued in this work for some time. He endured many hardships, but his efforts were in many cases crowned with success in winning souls for Christ. He too combined his work with that of Colporteur. J. J. Wiens has for some time labored among the Russians. Some of the older ministers, who still knew the Russian language, visited the congregations Petrofka and Eagle Creek frequently and preached to them the Word.

c. *The City Mission in Winnipeg.* A needy and responsive field for a city mission was found in Winnipeg in 1913. Here many German speaking people, who had recently immigrated and lived in poverty, were without church affiliation and without spiritual care. W. J. Bestvater, who had visited this part of the city, stressed the need of working among them and expressed his willingness to enter this work. Hereupon the Conference appointed Mr. and Mrs. Bestvater as city missionaries in Winnipeg, where they continued in this service until 1921.

For some time a hall was rented for holding the meetings and in 1915 a site for building a mission chapel was purchased. A basement was constructed on this lot and the meetings were held

there for a number of years. Sunday School as well as regular preaching services were conducted here. Helena Neufeld was appointed as a worker among children and assisted in the mission for several years. In 1916 Anna J. Thiessen was accepted by the Conference as a full time mission worker. Her work consisted in hospital visitation, tract distribution, conducting sewing classes with larger girls, and other work among children. From 1921 to 1925 Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Nickel had charge of the mission.

The Winnipeg city mission was for several years under the supervision of the Home Mission Committee of the Conference, and the work was cared for in the home mission budget. When the building of a mission hall was decided upon, the Conference elected a building committee to take care of this. Later a standing City Mission Committee of three members evolved, which has for many years supervised the city mission work on behalf of the Conference. The brethren John P. Wiebe, J. A. Kroeker, and G. G. Derksen have constituted this committee for many years and have, by supervising and directing this work, rendered valuable service to the Conference and to the Mission.

4. Other Activities of the Conference

Besides Home Missions, the Conference has engaged in several other activities which deserve mention.

a. *Education and Schools.* The Conference concerned itself with the problems of education and with the need of instruction in Bible and in the German language, from the very beginning. At the 1911 Conference a School Committee of nine members was appointed, which was to study the educational problems and to direct in these matters. The committee presented at the following Conference several recommendations in which they stressed the giving of such instruction in the existing public schools and the support of Bible schools. They also envisaged the establishing of a Normal School for the training of teachers. No conspicuous results came of this plan, but the stimulation ultimately led to advancement in education in the churches.

The first step toward a school for the M. B. Church was the establishing of a Bible School at Herbert, Saskatchewan. This school in which all the churches of the Herbert circuit participated and toward which the churches in the other two circuits also contributed to some extent, had its beginning in 1913. J. F. Harms, who at this time lived at Flowing Well, Saskatchewan, was largely

instrumental in getting this school built, and he became its first teacher. Harms has been the pioneer educator of the M. B. Church not only in Kansas but also in Canada. This Bible School offered four or five months of instruction in Bible and in German each winter, and young people from the surrounding churches attended it. The school became an important factor in the life of the churches of southern Saskatchewan. Beginning with 1921, W. J. Bestvater took charge of this Bible School and continued there for ten years.

The need for a normal school or a high school to train teachers for public schools in Mennonite circles, was advocated at the early Conferences. Since no Conference-School of this type materialized, it was recommended that the churches support the two Mennonite Academies, the one at Gretna, Manitoba, and the one at Rosthern, Saskatchewan. These two schools have prepared many teachers who later taught in Mennonite communities.

b. *Home for the Aged.* At several conferences the need for a home for aged church members was discussed and at one time a committee was appointed which was to find ways and means for establishing such a home. A Home under the auspices of the Conference did not materialize, but Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Hooze established a Home for the Aged as a private enterprise, at Winkler, Manitoba, in 1921. Though the Conference did not make itself responsible financially, it gladly received the reports of this work and gave its sympathetic moral support to the Home. A fairly large number of old people have here found a place of refuge in their declining years and have received loving care at their life's eventide.

c. *Promotion of Church Music.* Repeated references to singing in worship services and to meetings for song leader and singers indicate that the Conference in early years gave the matter of singing in church a good deal of attention. A "Dirigenten-Versammlung" was held, when the Conference convened and a large Song Festival, in which many choirs participated, became an established practice of the Conference. The matter of adopting a common hymnal in all the churches was at one time discussed and it was recommended that "Zionsglaubens-stimme" be used for this purpose. It, however, appears that the "Evangeliums-lieder" was used more commonly in the churches. A. G. Sawatzky and J. P. Wiebe have taken special pains to improve church music during this period. Sawatzky edited and published the "Saengerbote" for a number of years.

d. *Other Conference Activities.* The Conference has been active in several other spheres. The British and Foreign Bible Society has had its representatives attend the Conference and report of the work of the Society. This Bible distributing agency has found in the M. B. Church many warm and liberal supporters for its cause.

Hugo Spitzer, a convert from the Jews and a missionary to the Jews in Winnipeg, visited many of the early Conferences and reported of this work, and liberal support for this mission came from the M. B. Church on such occasions.

5. The Canadian District Conference in Its Relation to the M. B. General Conference

Like the District Conferences in the United States, the Canadian District Conference in early years retained a close and harmonious relationship with the General Conference. In 1915 and again in 1930 the General Conference convened in Canada. Many of the leading brethren from the churches in the United States representing various Board and Committees visited the **Conferences and reported of their work.** Foreign Missions, General Conference City Missions, Publication, and the cause of Tabor College were reported of at the conference sessions and the reports received warm and sympathetic support. Foreign Missions especially had strong supporters in the M. B. churches in Canada, and the missionaries, while on furlough, found keen interest and whole hearted support for the work when they visited the churches.

During the first World War, though the churches in Canada were not affected in the way that those in the United States were, they nevertheless faced new problems that had to reorientate themselves on the question as to what attitude a Christian should take with reference to participation in warfare. Immediately after the War, when the appalling needs for relief-help presented themselves, the M. B. Churches in Canada did their part.

CHAPTER XII

THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH 1924-1949

The years 1924 to 1949 mark a period in the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada, which shows a rapid growth and expansion of the church, which tells of definite increase in the varied activities of the Conference, and which presents several changes and problems in the development of the church. The historical source material for this quarter century is abundant and the topics that should receive consideration are many. We can, therefore, treat them only rather briefly.

1. Mennonite Immigrations from 1923 to 1930 and Their Significance for the M. B. Church

One of the most outstanding events in Mennonite history has been the coming of 21,000 Mennonites from Europe to Canada during the years 1923 to 1930. Their immigration has also been of great significance for the Mennonite Brethren Church. A fair proportion among them were of the Brethren, and with their coming the existing congregations received substantial increase in membership and many new assemblies sprang up. The M. B. Church thus spread to many localities where it had not been represented hitherto.

When these brethren arrived in Canada, they immediately faced many and difficult problems. Nearly all of them had come without financial means and had to establish their homes and find ways for making their living amid hardships and trials. Many of them, after struggling with poverty for a number of years, overcame their handicaps and have come to prosperity. Like their brethren, half a century earlier, they immediately were concerned about their spiritual welfare. Where they settled in the proximity of an M. B. Church, they united with it and participated in its services and activities. Where they settled in places where the M. B. Church was not represented, they established their own congregations as soon as possible.

The brethren, who had come to Canada earlier, assisted the newly arrived immigrants in various ways. Though many of them

had very limited means, especially in the prairie provinces where drought and crop failure had retarded them in their farming, they, nevertheless, received the newly arrived brethren into their homes and assisted them in material ways. The amalgamation of the two elements, the earlier Canadians and the brethren from Russia, into one church, was sometimes fraught with friction and misunderstanding. Yet it is remarkable how well the problems could be solved and how soon the two elements united into one church in Christ Jesus.

The M. B. Church in Canada has benefited greatly through the coming of so many brethren from Russia. Not only did the congregations increase in membership and thus gain in strength,



J. G. Wiens

but they have also received from among them many gifted and devoted ministers, leaders, teachers, and men qualified in practical affairs. Among the leading brethren, who by God's grace were enabled to make an important contribution toward the welfare and spiritual upbuilding of the M. B. Church in Canada, there were Herman A. Neufeld, Wm. Dyck, Jacob W. Reimer, John G. Wiens, Abr. H. Unruh, Gerhard Unruh, F. F. Isaac, C. F. Klassen, C. A. DeFehr, D. D. Derksen, H. Goossen, whose services were chiefly in Manitoba; Isaac Regehr, H. A. Regehr, J. G. Thiessen, who made their contribution mainly in Saskatchewan; B. B. Janz, A. A. Toews, J. A. Toews, who ministered in Alberta; J. A. Harder, C. C. Peters, Abr. Nachtigal, J. P. Braun, F. C. Thiessen, who have done their major work in British Columbia; and H. H. Janzen and I. Thiesen, who rendered important services in Ontario.

2. Growth and Expansion of the Church Since 1924

The decade following 1924 shows a very rapid growth of nearly all the M. B. congregations as well as the establishment of many new assemblies. At first this increase and spread was not noticeable in Manitoba. Very soon after that it began to show in Saskatchewan and at the same time congregations began to form in Ontario. A few years later settlements began in Alberta and churches sprang up in that province. During the last fifteen years the M. B. Church has also set foot in British Columbia, so that at present M. B. congregations are scattered over southern Canada, from Ontario to British Columbia. A brief consideration of the many new churches will be essential for an appreciation of the growth of the M. B. Church as a whole.



C. N. Hiebert

a. *Churches in Manitoba.* In addition to the three churches in the preceding chapter, many new churches sprang up in this province in a short time. The City Mission in Winnipeg, conducted by the Conference since 1913, led to the organization of a local church. This, however, remained small until 1924, when the immigration from Russia had fully set in. Many of the brethren who settled in this city joined with this church and consequently three M. B. congregations ultimately evolved, which developed into large churches.

The North End M. B. Church in Winnipeg, with its church building located at 621 College Ave., may be regarded as an outgrowth or a direct successor of the early City Mission. Many

of the brethren coming from Russia joined this church. C. N. Hiebert, who was the city missionary for some time, served as presiding minister of this congregation until 1937. A large church building was constructed in 1929, which served the rapidly growing congregation. The membership increased until 1936, when it numbered 551. That year the church was subdivided into two congregations—North End and South End each effecting its own organization. F. F. Isaac and B. B. Fast have since then served the North End church as presiding ministers and were assisted by other brethren. The present membership is 284.

The South End M. B. Church of Winnipeg, located at the corner of Juno and Williams Street, was organized in 1936 with P. J. Kornelsen as the first minister. After renting a place for worship for some time, they purchased a small church building. This they sold in 1940, when they were able to purchase the present building, a large brick edifice seating 1200 people. After P. J. Kornelsen had ministered to this church until 1947, H. H. Janzen was elected to the leadership and has ministered in this capacity since then. The present membership is 226.

The North Kildonan M. B. Church in the northwestern part of Winnipeg had its beginning in 1929 when a number of immigrant families settled in this locality and built their own houses. Though all of them struggled with poverty, they soon erected a small chapel, which was from time to time enlarged as the congregation grew. At present they have an adequate and attractive church building and the membership has grown to 260. H. M. Janzen, the first minister, led the congregation many years. He was succeeded by Abr. Toews, the present minister.

South of Winnipeg and east of the Red River are the churches Steinbach, Niverville, and Arnaud. Steinbach, first mentioned in the 1924 year book as having 13 members, has grown into one of the largest small-town churches, having now 218 members. G. H. Unruh served as the first presiding minister. J. W. Reimer and other ministers have assisted in preaching. The present minister is J. P. Epp. In 1947 the congregation erected a large church building.

A church was organized at Niverville in 1933 with F. J. Guenther as leader, having 60 members at that time. At present it numbers 108 members. W. W. Dyck serves this congregation as presiding minister. The church at Arnaud was organized in 1925 and has since then grown to a membership of 90. A church building was constructed in 1935. Abr. Nachtigal ministered there

to God's children in early years, and upon his leaving was succeeded by H. P. Toews who has had a long ministry. The present minister is Isaac Toews.

West of Winnipeg and comparatively near to the city are the churches, La Salle, Springstein, Sperling, Newton Siding, and Elm Creek. The group congregating at Marquette was organized as a meeting place in 1934 and is affiliated with the North End church in Winnipeg. Its leader is Isaac Penner, and the membership is 23. The church at La Salle was organized in 1926 and it erected its church building in 1930. It now has a membership of 46. Jacob A. Penner served as its first minister. At present Philip Wiebe ministers the Word to this congregation. The Springstein church had its beginning as a branch of the North End church in Winnipeg. A small church building was erected in 1938 and was enlarged in 1948. In 1942 the group was organized as a local church with John Voth as minister. At present Abr. Froese has charge of this congregation which numbers 60 members. A small group of the brethren has assembled at Sperling since 1933, which now numbers 19 members. Johann Martens was the leader for many years and at present Gerhard Neufeld leads the group. The M. B. Church at Newton Siding began in 1928. In 1940 it erected a church building, which burnt down soon after it was completed. The congregation then gathered in the basement for six years, but in 1946 the superstructure was put up again. John A. Derksen, Abr. A. Loewen, D. K. Janzen have served as ministers. The present membership is 105. An M. B. congregation which has been led for many years by H. J. Wiebe began at Elm Creek in 1932. At present H. H. Enns serves this church as presiding minister. The membership is 127.

In the area surrounding Winkler, southwest of Winnipeg, the congregations Altona, Gnadental, Morden, Lindal, and Justice have begun since 1924. The small congregation at Altona began in 1932 and Johann Andres served as its first minister. At present the group is a branch of Winkler church, is led by G. Braun and has 15 members. The Gnadental M. B. Church, near Plum Coulee, was organized in 1929 under the leadership of elder Wilhelm Dyck. The present minister, H. P. Harder, has served the church for some time. The membership is 30. The Morden M. B. Church, west of Winkler, was organized in 1930 with John Andres as its first minister. Its membership continued to grow for many years, but recently has shown a slight decrease, numbering now 143 members. After using several different halls for the services, this

The Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church 197

congregation built an adequate church in 1946. John P. Braun has ministered to this church many years. He was succeeded by F. H. Friesen, the present minister. The Lindal M. B. Church is largely the result of extension mission work done by the churches of Winkler and Morden, and by students of the Winkler Bible School. A church was organized in 1938, to which J. P. Braun ministered in addition to his work in the Morden church. A small building for holding the services was erected in 1939. The congregation has bought a quarter of land and the income from rent is used to meet the expenses of the church. This congregation represents several nationalities: Polish, English and German. J. Kehler has served as minister the last five years. The membership now is only 14. The congregation at Justice, formerly more frequently called Brookdale, began in 1930. In 1940 a church was built. Jacob J. Loewen has ministered here since 1937. The present membership is 39.

Another group of M. B. Churches farther west of the Winnipeg and Winkler area includes Manitou, and Lena, Boissevain, and Griswold. The Manitou M. B. Church began in 1927 under the leadership of Anton Berg. The membership at that time numbered 44, all recently arrived immigrants from Russia. Since then it has increased to 63. A church building was erected in 1931. Abram Friesen, Heinrich Goossen, and Gerhard Klassen have ministered to this church.

M. B. families scattered around Holmfeld and Lena were united into a congregation in 1928 with H. Unger as leader. Two church buildings have since been erected, one in Holmfeld, where P. Schultz leads the group, and the other near Lena, where H. Derksen serves as minister. The two groups regard themselves as one organized church which now numbers 61 members.

At Boissevain the M. B. Church was organized in 1928 with D. D. Derksen, who has served the church in this capacity to the present, as presiding minister. At first the group assembled in Bro. Derksen's home, then for several years in a school house. In 1944 a church was erected in the town of Boissevain. The present membership is 83.

The Griswold M. B. Church dates back to 1926, when some of the brethren began to gather for worship in the town of Alexander. In 1929 a church building was purchased in Griswold, where the congregation has gathered since. H. Penner led the church in the beginning. He has been succeeded in the ministry

by Jacob Abrahams, Peter Mandtler, and Abraham Friesen.. The membership is 51.

b. *Churches in Saskatchewan.* A number of M. B. churches began in the Rosthern or Northern Circuit of Saskatchewan after 1924. These owed their beginning mainly to the new settlements made by brethren immigrating from Russia. Some of these churches have flourished for some time and then decreased or discontinued completely. Several, however, have grown into fairly large congregations and still prosper.

In the city of Saskatoon, where the conference conducted a city mission for some time and where many members from M. B. churches went either to work or to study, a church was organized in 1932 and received into the conference. In 1936 a church building, which



H. S. Rempel

was intended to serve the congregation as well as the mission, was erected. G. H. Penner was active there in early years. In 1936 H. S. Rempel was stationed there as city missionary and he also served as minister of the congregation until recently. At present Peter Funk is the minister and leader of the church. The membership is 124. At Warman, north of Saskatoon, a group of 13 members which is affiliated with the Saskatoon church congregates regularly. The work at Warman is more of the nature of an extension-mission and is led by Menno Lepp.

An Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church was organized at Watrous, one hundred miles southeast of Saskatoon in 1927 under the leadership of P. D. Janzen. This congregation soon grew to

The Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church 199

150 members. In 1935 it joined the Canadian M. B. Conference. Since then many of the members have moved out of the province and the present membership is only 81. P. D. Janzen, Frank Wiens, and J. D. Dick have ministered to this congregation.

About eighty miles northwest of Saskatoon the three M. B. congregations, Mullingar, Fairholme, and Glenbush sprang up when immigrant families from Russia settled in this area. These settlers sought to serve their Lord amidst poverty and crop failures and hardships. The church at Mullingar, where M. K. Unrau served as minister, numbered at one time over sixty members. The Fairholme church, later commonly named Speedwell had at one time nearly one hundred members. In recent years all but three members have left. The M. B. Church at Glenbush was organized with 17 members in 1928 and soon grew into a church of 150 members and a fairly large church building was erected. N. H. Pauls, the present minister, has served the church for many years. The membership at present is 136.

Three other M. B. congregations have been established in Saskatchewan still farther north. The one at Maidstone, sixty miles northwest of North Battleford, was organized in 1926 with twelve members. This group has always remained small and numbers now only 9 members. John Bettcher serves them as leader. At Compass, near Meadow Lake, an M. B. Church was organized in 1938 which has by now decreased to 12 members. Frank Janzen ministered there formerly, and at present P. T. Schnor serves this group. The Foam Lake M. B. Church was also organized in 1938 having 30 members at that time. In 1945 a church was built. N. P. Janz and several other brethren served there as ministers. The membership at present is 23.

Several M. B. Churches began in the Herbert or South Saskatchewan Circuit since 1924. A congregation at Swift Current was organized into a church in 1933. A building was erected in the eastern part of the city, where the group of 32 members still gather for worship. F. F. Peters has been their minister since 1941. The two congregations Reinfeld and Blumenort began south of Swift Current, where members immigrating from Russia purchased the villages and farmland from Old Colony Mennonites, who moved to Mexico. The one at Reinfeld, near McMahon, was organized as a church in 1927 and the following year a building was erected. C. C. Penner served as minister of this church for many years. Its membership has lately decreased, and is now 39. The church at Blumenort, west of Reinfeld, flourished for many years under the

leadership of Franz W. Martens. Recently it has, however, been discontinued.

In 1930 an M. B. Church named Friedensheim was organized at Beechy, north of the South Saskatchewan River. This has also decreased very much in membership during recent years and now numbers only 21 members. Johann Wiens ministered to this congregation many years. At Elbow and Eyebrow, east of the great bend in the South Saskatchewan River, small congregations existed for many years, but recently the remaining members have moved to other places. At Truax, southwest of Moose Jaw, a small congregation continued many years, which was affiliated with the Herbert church and was served by its ministers. It has recently also been discontinued. Another congregation affiliated with the church at Herbert is that in Regina, which was established in 1941. This group, which has been led by A. Klassen from the beginning, now numbers 24 members.

c. *Churches in Alberta.* The M. B. Church spread westward into Alberta, when many immigrants coming from Russia settled in various parts of this province. The first M. B. Church in Alberta, and the one destined to become the largest and most prominent one, is the one at Coaldale, ten miles east of Lethbridge. Here a larger number of families settled on irrigated land in 1926 and in the years following. The Lord blessed their diligence and thrift, and soon a prosperous settlement developed. In May, 1926 the first members of the M. B. Church met and organized themselves with Klas Enns as temporary leader. Meetings were at first held in homes, then in a large hayloft, then in a school house, and in 1928 a church building was erected. Since the congregation grew rapidly, this building had to be enlarged from time to time. In 1939 it was replaced by a new church measuring 60' by 104' and seating over 1000 people. The membership has grown to 468. F. Friesen has served the church as minister from 1926 to 1928, and B. B. Janz from 1928 to 1947. Since 1947 Jacob Siemens has been the presiding minister, assisted by D. J. Pankratz. A number of other ministerial brethren have also assisted in the preaching constantly.

A group of M. B. church members residing at Pincer Creek, but belonging to the Coaldale church, conducted their own meetings for some time. In 1948 they organized a separate congregation with D. D. Doerksen as minister. Their membership is 25. At Grassy Lake, about sixty miles east of Coaldale, a congregation began in 1927, which has slowly increased and now numbers 43

members. After meeting in a church basement for twelve years, the congregation was at last able to complete its church building in 1948. P. Neufeld, the first minister, has served the church a number of years. The present minister is David Penner.

Several M. B. Churches were established in central Alberta. The one at Vauxhall was organized in 1933. In 1936 this congregation built a church which was destroyed by fire in 1940 as a result of arson. After using a basement for eight years, a new church building was constructed in 1949. P. Langeman served the church as its minister. The present minister is D. P. Petkau, and the membership is 77.

The church at Gem was organized in 1929 with a membership of 35. For a number of years the group assembled together with the members of the E. M. B. Church and with those of the General Conference Mennonite Church, having their services in a school house. A church building which was later enlarged was erected in 1932. H. K. Siemens was the minister until 1934, when he was followed by P. P. Doerksen, who has served there the past fifteen years. The present membership is 126. The small group of church members at Rosemary has for some time been affiliated with the church at Gem, but in 1945 it was organized as a local church. Its ministers were Franz Friesen and A. Willms, and its present membership is 16.

The congregation at Namaka formerly belonged to the Evangelical M. B. Church and was organized as one of their local churches in 1927. In 1942 it united with the Canadian M. B. Conference. A. A. Toews has served this church as presiding minister from 1927 to 1947 and is succeeded by G. Dirks. The membership, which has decreased in recent years, now numbers 41. Members of the M. B. Church still remaining at Crowfoot and Munson are affiliated with the Namaka congregation.

The Linden M. B. Church, located near Acme, belonged to the E. M. B. Conference until 1948, when it united with the M. B. Conference. This church was ministered to by N. A. Rempel for twenty years. The present minister is Sam Ratzlaff. The membership is 71.

In the area of Lindbrook and Tofield, still farther north, several M. B. families settled in 1928. These organized themselves as the Lindbrook M. B. Church with A. Froese as minister. After meeting in their homes until 1940, a church building was erected and the membership soon grew to 70. Since then it has decreased to 34. P. J. Warkentin is the present minister.

An M. B. settlement began in the Peace River area in north-western Alberta in 1928 and the brethren organized themselves as the LaGlace M. B. Church. This congregation prospered, and at one time numbered well over one hundred members. A church building was erected and for some time also a Bible School was conducted. G. Wiens, J. Schmidt, M. Hamm, N. Siebert, and A. Janz served the church as ministers. The present membership is 46.

d. *Churches in Ontario and the Ontario M. B. Conference.* When the Mennonite immigration from Russia fully set in, in 1924 and 1925, many of the new-comers began to settle in the southern part of Ontario. Among these were a fair number of the Men-



H. H. Janzen

nonite Brethren and some of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. These in many cases united and formed congregations of their own. In 1932 these congregations organized themselves as the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. We shall first treat the history of the local churches that have been established in the province and then consider briefly the Conference organization.

The M. B. Church in the city of Kitchener was organized in 1925 under the name, "Molotschna Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde." When it was organized in 1932 with H. H. Janzen as minister, it adopted the present name, Kitchener M. B. Church. For a num-

ber of years the congregation used a rented hall for its meetings. Later it bought a commodious building, which it still uses. The membership, which is mostly urban, has constantly increased and now stands at 253. H. G. Thielman and F. C. Peters have succeeded Bro. Janzen as presiding ministers and other ministerial brethren have assisted them.

The two small congregations, New Hamburg and Hespeler, are located near Kitchener. The former was organized in 1932 with Peter Goertzen as leader. This congregation, which meets in a rented hall, now numbers only 19 members and David Dick leads the group. The congregation at Hespeler was also organized in 1932 under the leadership of J. Bartels. The group congregates together with members of the United Mennonite Church in a rented hall. Jacob Suderman has served as minister in recent years, and J. Schoenke has taken his place during his absence. The membership, which has lately decreased, is now 14.

The three prosperous congregations, Virgil, Vineland, and St. Catharines, have grown up in the area west of Niagara Falls. The Virgil M. B. Church, organized under the leadership of John F. Dick in 1932, has become the largest M. B. Church in Ontario, numbering 401 members. At first a place was rented in the town, Niagara on the Lake, for holding the meetings. Later a large and adequate church building was constructed in the village of Virgil. The rapid growth of this congregation is partly accounted for by the recent strong influx of M. B. families from the provinces farther west. Ministers who have served this congregation are, J. F. Dick, D. Klassen, A. Block, J. Derksen, P. Friesen, F. Wiens, P. Esau, F. F. Kroeker, I. Ewert and the present leader, John D. Penner.

The M. B. Church at Vineland was organized in 1932 with D. Klassen as leader. All of the early members were immigrants from Russia. At first they met for worship together with members of the United Mennonite Church in a rented implement shed. Later they bought this shed and remodelled it into a church building, which has the appearance of a tabernacle. The membership, the majority of which are rural people, is now 265. Ministers who have served this congregation are D. Klassen, J. F. Dick, G. Matthies, B. B. Boldt, P. Goertzen, J. K. Janzen, D. M. Thielman, A. A. Froese, Peter Mandtler, and the present presiding minister Henry P. Wiebe.

The M. B. Church of St. Catharines was organized in 1943 and has had an encouraging growth since, numbering at present

146 members. After holding the services in a rented hall for a number of years, the congregation erected an attractive church building in 1949. G. J. Epp and A. H. Redekopp have served the church as ministers and H. Janzen leads it.

Two additional congregations are located in southern Ontario further west. The one at Port Rowan, near the shores of Lake Erie, was organized in 1932 with Jacob A. Penner as presiding minister. This rural congregation at first rented an old church building for holding its meetings. Later it purchased the same and remodelled it into a practical church building. Other ministers who have served this church are P. Reimer, Abr. Pauls, and Peter Lodde. The present membership is 94.

The Leamington M. B. Church, the membership of which is composed mainly of farmers, began in 1932. After assembling together with the United Mennonite Church in a rented hall for a number of years, the congregation erected its own church building. Isaac Thiessen served the church as presiding minister until 1947, when D. Derksen succeeded him. Other brethren assisting in the ministry are Abr. Huebert, Jac. J. Kroeker, and W. Toews. The church has at present 166 members.

In the fall of 1932 the seven M. B. Churches, which had by that time begun in Ontario, united for a conference and organized themselves as the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. Since then, they have held their annual Conference conventions. As a Conference they undertook the care for their churches, conducted home mission work, for some time took over the responsibility for the mental hospital at Vineland and supported the same, gave their support to the Bible school at Virgil, and participated in foreign mission activities.

In 1936 the Ontario M. B. Conference was received into the M. B. General Conference as a District Conference to work in co-operation with it in its various activities. In 1944 this Conference united with the Canadian M. B. District Conference and since then all the M. B. Churches in Canada form the Canadian M. B. Conference and are so represented in the General Conference of the M. B. Church of North America. The Ontario M. B. Conference, however, still continues to function as a Provincial Conference and holds its annual conventions.

e. *Spread of the M. B. Church to British Columbia.* The M. B. Church was represented in British Columbia as early as 1918 when Elder Heinrich Voth of Minnesota and several other families settled at Vanderhoof. This settlement, however, proved to be of

a short duration only, as the members moved to other parts of Canada. The Vanderhoof congregation numbered 40 members in 1918.

In 1929 a migration of members of the M. B. Church to British Columbia began, which soon gained momentum and took on large dimensions. Most of these settlers came from the prairie provinces, where the continual crop failures had made them discouraged. Nearly all of them settled in the fertile Frazer valley, about fifty miles east of Vancouver. Here in British Columbia they applied themselves to the raising of berries and other fruits and the production of dairy products and poultry products. Many prospered in a very remarkable way. Some members have found remunerative employment in the towns or have begun a business of their own. A fair number have also settled in the city Vancouver, and others on Vancouver Island.

Thirteen M. B. Churches have sprung up in British Columbia within the last two decades and most of these have become large ones. The M. B. Church is today more strongly represented in this province than in any other province in Canada.

Some of the less favorable features and some of the difficult problems that the church here has to deal with should not be lost sight of. The fall in prices of fruits and other products and the difficulty of marketing them has become a serious drawback during the last two years. In 1948 a devastating flood swept through the valley. Where the dykes along the river bank gave way, the surrounding country was inundated for weeks, causing much damage and loss. The members of several congregations suffered severe loss through this disaster. For the church it has not always been easy to steer wisely and to proceed cautiously under the changing conditions which had not before been anticipated. Since many of the young people have gone to the cities for employment, the problem of keeping them attached and loyal to home and church and of caring for their spiritual needs has become one of the most important and most difficult problems for the church to solve.

The first and largest of the M. B. churches in the Frazer valley is that of Yarrow. Here a congregation of 875 members has grown up in a compact settlement clustered around the small town of Yarrow. This church was organized in 1929 under the leadership of P. Dyke. After one year K. A. Klassen had charge for a short time and afterward J. A. Harder served as presiding minister until 1949. Among the many other ministers who have been active in proclaiming God's Word in this congregation are Abr. Nachtigal, P. J.

Martens, H. G. Bartsch, H. Lenzman. Because of the rapid growth of this congregation, the church building was dismantled in 1938 and a new one, 90' by 60' was erected. This too has become too small on many occasions.

The M. B. Church of Sardis, a short distance north of Yarrow, began about 1930 and has grown into a church of 270 members. H. G. Dueck served as minister from the beginning to the present. During the flood of 1948 this congregation suffered especially. It was in this church that the well-known Bible expounder, J. W. Reimer, spent the closing years of his blessed life.

Members of the M. B. Church began to settle at Abbotsford, west of Yarrow, in 1933 and soon a church was organized which was in early years ministered to by A. D. Rempel. This church



J. A. Harder

has grown rapidly, numbering at present 500 members, and the spacious church building is well filled for the meetings. H. H. Nickel is the present presiding minister and is assisted by several brethren. The North Abbotsford church was organized in 1939 and received into the Conference. It has grown to have a membership of 238. J. J. Duerksen the present minister is assisted by several other ministers. Since the organization of the North Abbotsford church, the earlier congregation has been named the South Abbotsford church.

Two congregations have been established comparatively recently at Chilliwack, one of the larger towns east of Yarrow. The East Chilliwack M. B. Church was organized in 1945 and has at

present a membership of 237. H. Krocker, N. Rempel, S. Hodel and several other brethren serve here as ministers. An adequate church building was recently completed. The Chilliwack M. B. Church was organized in 1947 and has also built a church recently. Its membership is 182, and the presiding minister is J. I. Bergen.

In recent years the churches Arnold, Matsqui, and East Aldergrove have been established to the west of Yarrow. The church at Arnold, first mentioned in the year book for 1944, has had J. P. Braun and J. J. Klassen as presiding ministers and its membership has grown to 200. The M. B. Church of Matsqui was received into the Conference in 1945. Its membership is 182 and the present minister is A. D. Rempel. The East Aldergrove M. B. Church was organized in 1947 and its membership has reached 179. G. P. Warkentin is its present minister.

Several M. B. families settled at Strawberry Hill, near Vancouver and a church was organized there in 1945 which is ministered to by H. D. Friesen. Its membership is 94. The M. B. church in the city of Vancouver is first mentioned in 1936. The congregation procured a site for a church and constructed the basement, in which it assembled a number of years. In 1949 it was able to complete its large church building in which it now congregates. H. J. Klassen is the presiding minister, who is assisted by several brethren. The membership is 215.

A number of M. B. families settled at Black Creek in the north-eastern part of Vancouver Island. The church of this place is first mentioned in 1939. At present Jacob Falk leads the church and J. A. Goertz serves as minister. The membership is 52.

In recent years members of the M. B. Church settled at Kelowna on the eastern shore of Lake Okanagan. These were organized as a church in 1947 and were received into the Conference. The membership of this scattered congregation is 63. J. J. Unger is the minister.

f. Growth of the M. B. Churches in Canada, 1924 to 1949.

The M. B. Church has experienced a most remarkable growth in Canada during the past quarter century. The large scale immigrations from Europe during the first part of the period mainly account for this rapid increase. The immigrations after 1947, when about 5400 Mennonites came to Canada, also included some of those who preferred to join the M. B. Church and they have especially helped to increase the membership for the past year. A large percentage of the net increase from year to year is, however, due to the continuous home mission effort which resulted in

many conversions and, therefore, in many additions to the churches through baptism.

There has also been much shifting about and moving from one locality to another on the part of many members of the M. B. Church. This has led to a marked decline in the membership of some churches or even to the dissolution of some. On the other hand it has caused the rapid growth of some congregations and the establishing of many new ones. During the past fifteen years the trend has been especially to leave Saskatchewan and other arid regions and to go either westward to British Columbia or eastward to Ontario. The heaviest migration has been that to British Columbia, where the churches have experienced a surprisingly rapid growth.

The following table gives the statistics at different intervals, stating the number of churches, the membership, and the number of ordained ministers. These figures are taken from the Canadian M. B. Conference Year Books, as given at the close of the book except that one small correction for 1949 is made.

Table giving the number of churches, the membership and the number of ordained Ministers in the Canadian M. B. Church.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Manitoba</i>	<i>Sask.</i>	<i>Alberta</i>	<i>B.C.</i>	<i>Ontario</i>	<i>Total</i>
1924						
Churches	2	18				20
Members	391	1372				1763
Ministers	7	24				31
1930						
Churches	14	26	4			44
Members	1483	2166	221			3870
Ministers	39	44	14			97
1936						
Churches	21	31	6	7		65
Members	2073	2558	550	548		5699
Ministers	47	45	14	21		127
1942						
Churches	24	31	6	6	7	74
Members	2304	2811	873	1247	805	8040
Ministers	63	46	26	22	19	176
1949						
Churches	24	28	10	13	8	83
Members	2651	2012	955	3287	1358	10263
Ministers	69	39	26	65	29	228

3. The Annual Conventions of the Conference. 1924-1949

The Canadian M. B. Conference has convened every year since its beginning in 1910, except in 1940, when due to travel difficulties during wartime, it became impracticable to hold a Conference. Since 1924 the Conference has constantly grown in the number of churches represented, in the size of the convention gatherings, and in the scope of activities it has undertaken. Though the Conference gatherings have in recent years been very large, on some occasions numbering more than two thousand people, some local church or group of churches has always been willing to serve as host to the Conference and to entertain the many guests free of charge. During the past few years the Conference has lasted for six days, beginning on Saturday and closing on Thursday.

The Conference program has also undergone a remarkable development. Since 1947 a Youth Conference has been included and held on the first day at which a host of young people were present, and where topics of special value to them were discussed. Singing has continued to hold its place in the Canadian Conference and a special song festival, attended by a vast audience, has been one of the prominent features of the conferences. Addresses on topics of special interest to ministers or of importance to the church in general, have often been rendered by able brethren. The Conference Festival Sunday has always been the high point and the occasion for the largest gatherings. Here the claims of home missions and of foreign missions have been presented to the vast audiences and have had good response. For the business sessions an ever increasing amount of work has engaged the Conference for deliberation and disposal.

The Lord has graciously granted unto the Canadian M. B. Conference a large number of devoted workers and some very able leaders. The brethren H. S. Voth, A. H. Unruh, H. H. Janzn, J. A. Harder, B. B. Janz and several other men have had a leading role in the varied offices and committees of the Conference and have rendered highly valued services. An ever increasing number of young men are entering the services for their Lord and for their church. This is one of the most encouraging features in envisaging the prospects for the future development and welfare of the M. B. Church in Canada.

With the growth of the Conference and the expansion of its activities, the need for incorporating itself under the legal requirements of Canada and for framing a constitution by which to regu-

late its procedures became evident. The Conference, therefore, elected a committee to draw up a constitution and to take the necessary steps toward incorporation. The Constitution was adopted by the Conference in 1945 and before the close of the year the legal incorporation was effected. Since then the Conference has endeavored to conduct its activities according to the specifications of the Constitution.

This Constitution includes, besides the Charter and the Bill of Incorporation, the By-Laws which regulate the work of the Conference. According to the provisions of the Bill of Incorporation, the Conference is legally empowered to acquire and hold property, to make investments, to borrow money, and to transfer property. The By-Laws, which include twenty one articles, include the following important sections: A condensed statement of the Confession of Faith is given. The relation of the churches to the Conference is defined. A provision for Provincial Conferences is made and their subordinate position in the Canadian M. B. Conference is set forth. Membership in the Conference is regulated. Provision is made for the required organization, i. e., the officers and standing committees are enumerated and their duties are specified. Provision for the holding of the annual conventions are made.

Among the important committees provided for, the Committee of Reference and Counsel, "Fuersorgekomitee," comes first. The duty of this committee, which is composed of the officers of the Conference and of two members from each of the five provinces, is to watch over the spiritual welfare of the churches. Churches and larger groups of members in churches, as well as other committees, may apply to this committee for advice and help. The Committee of Reference and Counsel is authorized to deal with matters that arise during the interim between the conventions of the Conference. At Conference time it reports of its work and serves with recommendations on questions that are referred to it.

The Board of Trustees or Directors is composed of eleven members, each of the five provinces being represented therein. This Board of Trustees represents the Conference in all business and legal matters. It is authorized and empowered to draw up documents necessary for the transfer of real estate, to receive bequests and donations, and to manage all real estate and permanent funds of the Conference.

The Constitution further provides for the conducting of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, City Missions, Education, and General Welfare. In addition to the two committees mentioned, the Con-

stitution provides further for the following committees: Committee for Home Missions, Educational Committee, Committee on General Welfare and Public Relations, Auditing Committee, and Program Committee. Article XX specifies the provisions under which the several Provincial Conferences may be organized, defines the organizing and receiving of new churches, and states what branches of work shall be under their supervision. Each provincial conference is to hold its annual convention. Committees of the Canadian Conference are expected to report to the provincial conferences on matters that concern them, and the provincial conferences are expected to report to the Canadian Conference of their activities.

4. Home Mission Activities of the Conference

Home mission work continued to hold a most prominent place in the Conference during this entire period. During the earlier part of this period this work was arranged for and supervised by the Conference. In the last decade it has gradually been delegated more and more to the provincial conferences. The amount and scope of home mission work has increased with the growth of the Conference and has also undergone some modifications.

In 1924 the work was still directed by a committee of three members, composed of the brethren Johann Buhler, J. W. Thiesen, and H. A. Thiessen. After that W. J. Bestvater, J. F. Redekopp, and F. J. Baerg have for some time served on this committee. The work of city missions was separated from that done under the Home Missions Committee and assigned to a City Missions Committee. In this committee the brethren J. A. Kroeker, J. P. Wiebe, and G. G. Derksen have served the Conference a long time. Beginning with 1934 the home mission activities were shifted to the provinces and assigned to the supervision of their conferences to a large extent, though a Home Missions Committee still existed for some time. From the financial reports it appears that the contributions for home missions have gradually increased from year to year.

a. *Home Mission Work in the Churches.* The Conference found an ever widening field for evangelistic work in its own churches and in the many new settlements and stations: doors of opportunity swung open on every side. After the immigration from Russia had set in and the new settlers had to adjust themselves to the new environment, the need for a ministry of comfort among them was urgent. Building them into the structure of the Canadian

Mennonite Brethren Church was the most important phase of home mission effort for some time.

During the earlier part of this period the method of work continued very much along the lines that it had been carried on before. The Conference accepted the evangelists, made the schedule for their work, and arranged the budget for the support of the workers. The holding of prolonged evangelistic services in the churches was continued by many of the evangelists. A large part of the work was, however, also devoted to the upbuilding of the spiritual life of the members. This work was done through Bible study, Bible discussions, and Bible addresses, directed by the more experienced and well grounded ministers in the church.

God has not failed to give to the Canadian M. B. Church a large number of well qualified and devoted workers for the various phases of home mission work. The year books following 1924 enumerate many men who have been active in the field of evangelism. Many of the ministers, having come with the immigration from Russia, devoted themselves to this form of ministry for some time. Younger workers, who have had the advantages of an education in some Bible School, have likewise entered the service for their Master with the passion of leading souls to Him.

The response to the evangelistic effort in the churches has, as a rule, been very gratifying. The prolonged evangelistic services often led to a revival, where the members were led nearer to the Lord and where many unsaved ones were led to an acceptance of Jesus Christ in faith. The number of additions to the churches through baptism has varied from year to year. Not all the year books give the figures. For those given, the following are the years with the highest number: 1932—340, 1941—335, 1945—356, 1947—493, and 1948—503. The continuous and rapid growth of the Canadian M. B. Church can largely be accounted for by its fervent evangelistic efforts. At least fifty per cent of the present membership of 10,263 has been added to the church through baptisms during the past twenty five years. How wonderfully the Lord has blessed the proclamation of His saving Gospel and how truly has the promise been fulfilled, "my word - - shall not return unto me void!"

b. *City Missions.* There has been a definite increase in the interest shown in the city missions on the part of the Canadian M. B. Church as well as in the amount of work undertaken. This advance is not only accounted for by the fact that the church grew and was thus enabled to do more work, but also by the fact that an increasing number of M. B. families began to reside in the cities.

These often came into contact with the needs and opportunities for such work and were prompted to undertake work in their communities. Making a comparison we find that there was in 1924 only one city church, the one in Winnipeg, with 48 members; in 1949 there were churches in Kitchener, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Vancouver having a total membership of 1386 members. These city churches were to some extent the outgrowth of city missions, but they in turn became also a contributing factor in promoting mission work in cities.

The mission in Winnipeg has continued to the present, but has undergone several changes. In 1925 Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Hiebert were procured for this post and they served here as missionaries until 1937. With the coming of many Mennonite immigrants after 1924, the mission found an important field of service among them. Very many of them passed through Winnipeg and resided there temporarily. They needed counsel and assistance and the mission lent a helping hand where it could. A large number located in the city, and the mission aided them in finding living quarters and employment. Those among them who belonged to the M. B. Church began to attend the mission chapel, soon joined the mission church as members and also began to assist in the work. The result was a congregation where the members with historical Mennonite background soon predominated. As we have seen previously, the North End M. B. Church soon evolved, and the South End M. B. Church as well as the Kildonan M. B. Church were established later.

An M. B. City Mission in Winnipeg, however, continued. For some time the meetings were held in a basement over which they intended to build an adequate chapel later. An enlarged committee which was delegated to take steps in the matter of building, found it advisable to sell the basement and to purchase a building site at 621 College Avenue in the northern part of the city. Funds were solicited and in 1929 a large church building with a full basement was constructed. Of the amount of \$16,000 contributed for this purpose, a large share came from members living in the city and over \$5000 from M. B. Churches in the United States. This building has become the home of the North End M. B. congregation.

As the work of the mission expanded, Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Rempel were added to the staff of workers in 1930 and they continued in this service until 1935. Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Falk, who had assisted in the mission for several years, were entrusted with the superintendency in 1937 when Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Hiebert left.

A. B. Peters has also assisted in the work at times. Since the transfer of city mission work to the provincial conferences, the Manitoba M. B. Provincial Conference has been in charge of this mission and has recently purchased a building for the mission work as well as a residence for the missionaries. The work is being conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Falk in close cooperation with the M. B. churches in the city.

A unique phase of mission work in Winnipeg has been that of providing a Christian Home for girls. Many girls from M. B. families came to Winnipeg to find employment, and the need of providing a home for them became apparent. Anna Thiessen, who was accepted as city mission worker for Winnipeg in 1916 and who has continued in this service until 1948, began such a home in 1925. In this home Mennonite girls who came to the city were not only sheltered until they found work and a place to live, but they also retained a connection with the home and could return thither for fellowship and spiritual help at any time. An association was organized among the girls, the "Tabaea Verein," which convened regularly for Christian fellowship and which also took part in mission activities. At times over 250 such girls resided in the city and had connection with the home. In all, several thousand girls have here found a home and friends and spiritual uplift while away from their loved ones. In 1927 the Mary-Martha Home, a large two story building at 437 Mountain Ave., was purchased for this purpose. Sister Thiessen has been largely instrumental not only in raising the required funds for purchasing this Home, but also in making the whole work a success. The Mary-Martha Home was taken over by the Conference in 1927.

The city mission in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, had its beginning in 1932 when G. H. Penner, began to hold Sunday School and other meetings among the Old Colony Mennonites who had come to reside in this city. The Conference recognized this work and began to give financial support for it that year. Through the aid of the churches in the Rosthern Circuit, the basement for a church building was constructed in 1935, and meetings were held in there until the following year, when the church was completed. In the fall of 1935 the Conference stationed Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Rempel as city missionaries in Saskatoon, and they have been active in this work since then. Their coming and the erection of the church building helped to stabilize the work and resulted in an active congregation. Since many girls from Mennonite homes came to Saskatoon for work, the need of establishing a home for them became

apparent, and Mrs. Rempel has conducted such a home for many years. In addition to the mission work and ministerial duties in the church, Bro. Rempel has been engaged in selling books and other Christian literature. This mission was fully taken over by the Conference in 1936, and later assigned to the Saskatchewan Provincial Conference.

A city mission which was sponsored by the churches in British Columbia, was begun in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1936. The following year, when this work was reported of to the Conference, it was decided that some financial support should be given for this work from the conference treasury. In 1939 J. G. Thiesen came to Vancouver and was for some time active in this mission, chiefly among Russians and German speaking people. H. J. Klassen has for a number of years been engaged as city missionary as well as minister of the local church. Many Mennonite girls came to the city for employment and it became necessary to arrange a home for their welfare. Tina Lepp and Sara Wiens have conducted such a home for some time.

At Swift Current in southern Saskatchewan a city mission has been conducted for several years which has been supported by the churches of that circuit. Here A. H. Wieler was in charge of the work to begin with. At present G. Koehn is engaged in the work of this mission.

c. Extension Mission Work. A vast field with splendid opportunities for extension mission work in rural communities has been open for the Canadian M. B. Church from its beginning. Some of these opportunities have been seized and made use of; others have been neglected. Where the church has been true to her Lord and has ventured forth with the Gospel message, her Lord has been faithful and granted His blessing and has rewarded such effort with definite results.

Among the villages of the earlier Mennonites, commonly called the Old Colony Mennonites and the Sommerfeld Mennonites, conditions prevailed where the spiritual life was sorely neglected. When about two decades ago many of them migrated to Mexico and Paraguay, nearly all of their ministers left them, and the remaining groups were almost completely void of any spiritual care. Many in the M. B. Churches, therefore, realized that they had a duty to fulfil toward them. Some of the brethren worked among them and, where possible, opened and conducted Sunday Schools. G. H. Penner, J. P. Dyck, and J. A. Nickel have done considerable work among those living in the area of the North Saskatchewan

Circuit. Other brethren have been similarly active in Southern Saskatchewan and in Manitoba. Not infrequently these efforts led to the salvation of the unsaved.

The earlier work among the Russians in Canada had for some time been left almost entirely to the Russians themselves. The two churches, Eagle Creek and Petrofka, in Saskatchewan, however, continued, but very strongly leaning toward the Russian Baptists. Among the brethren immigrating from Russia in the years following 1923 were a number of ministers who had mastered the Russian language. Largely due to their coming, the mission among the Canadian Russians received a new impetus. The Conference again became interested in the work and encouraged it. For several years the M. B. General Conference sponsored such a mission in Canada and through its Board for Foreign Missions appointed several ministers for this work and supported them financially. Since 1948 the General Conference has discontinued this support, and the work among Russians is now conducted by the several provincial conferences. The brethren who have been especially active in mission work among the Russians in recent years are—A. Huebert and H. H. Janzen in Ontario; D. Wiens at Arlee (Eagle Creek), Saskatchewan; and P. Schroeder, J. G. Thiessen, and C. P. Janzen in British Columbia.

The Western Children's Mission has developed in Saskatchewan since 1940 and has received the support and cooperation of the churches of that province. This work, which includes the establishing of Mission Posts in neglected frontier settlements, consists largely in the house to house visitation, the conducting of Sunday School, and the holding of church services and evangelistic meetings. Many young people have devoted themselves to useful services for Christ through this mission and have become instrumental in leading souls to an acceptance of Christ as their Savior. The work has been largely sponsored by the Bible Schools in the province and most of the workers have received their training in these schools. Short term Daily Vacation Bible Schools in rural areas are arranged for and conducted.

Extension mission work which has been directed and supported by the churches of this province was opened at several frontier points in Manitoba. When this work started, it was for several years carried on as a border mission, "Rand Mission." The stations where special effort had been put forth are Winnipegosis, Ashern, and Moosehorn. In more recent years the extension mis-

sion work in this province received the name "Canadian Inland Mission."

In British Columbia the "West Coast Children's Mission" was established, which was supported by the M. B. Churches. In 1947 this province reports that extension mission work is being done at three stations and the 1949 report states that two couples are fully engaged in frontier mission work and that many Sunday Schools are operated under the auspices of local churches. The work of a Tract Society is also reported and steps were taken to make this work a provincial conference project. From Alberta and Ontario the reports indicate that some extension work is also being done in these provinces and that some local churches are active therein.

5. The Provincial Conferences

The constitution adopted by the Conference in 1945 provided for the organization of provincial conference in each of the provinces and for their activities. The provincial conferences, however, were not an establishment of the Canadian Conference, but a natural and gradual development in the respective provinces because of the local needs and circumstances. At first there were the semi-annual gatherings in the circuits, the "Halbjaehrliche Kreis Versammlungen." Later a conference evolved out of these in each of the provinces. In Ontario, where the annual Conference had existed since 1932, this continued as a provincial conference after the Ontario Conference had fully joined the Canadian Conference. In Saskatchewan each of the two circuits continues to hold its own meetings once a year, but the two circuits have also united in a provincial conference which convenes annually. The churches in Manitoba, in Alberta and in British Columbia have likewise in each case united and formed their own provincial conference and hold their own annual conventions.

The provincial conferences devote their attention and efforts mainly to matters of a local or provincial nature. The problems relating to the local churches are taken care of, ministerial conferences are arranged for and conducted, the various phases of home mission work are undertaken and supervised, and in some cases Bible schools and high schools are operated by the provincial conferences. These annual conferences are arranged so as to include a festival Sunday. The provision of having these conferences enables many people to attend and take part in them. It also makes it possible to dispose of items of business, which are of a local

nature, in a better and much quicker way, than could be done at the larger conference for all Canada.

Home mission work is the most important phase of Canadian Conference work that has been delegated to the provincial conferences. At the 1933 Conference the proposition gained ground that the home mission work should be given over to the supervision of provincial conferences and that the churches in each province arrange for their home mission work. At the next Conference further steps were taken and gradually the home mission work was shifted to the provincial conferences.

Each provincial conference now selects its fields, chooses its evangelists, arranges the plan for the work, raises the required funds, and makes its budget. A Home Missions Committee elected by the provincial conference supervises the work and also reports to the Canadian Conference on the same. The Canadian Conference has a Home Missions Committee, composed of a statistician and representatives from all the provinces and this committee may assist the provinces or churches in matters pertaining to home missions. Since the establishment of provincial conferences, the evangelists and itinerating ministers have been chosen mainly from the ministers or Bible School teachers residing in the respective province. Occasionally they are called from other provinces or even from M. B. Churches in the United States.

City mission work too, has been delegated to the provincial conferences and the missions previously begun, are now continued by the provinces, each having its committee to supervise the work, its mission workers, and its ways and means for financing the missions.

6. Education and Schools in the Canadian M. B. Conference

The Canadian M. B. Church has made rapid forward strides in education since 1924. Several obvious reasons account for this progress: The general advance in education in Canada stimulated the M. B. Church to put forth more efforts for educating her young people. The growth of the church in numbers as well as in economic resources made it possible to give more attention to schools than before. Since many young people attended high schools and academies and then entered the teaching profession, they became instrumental in preparing the church for advance in its own educational program. The immigration from Russia brought into the midst of the M. B. Church many well educated people, among them

a number of school teachers, and this circumstance not only gave a new impetus to education but it also provided some of the required teachers, especially for Bible Schools.

The reasons why the M. B. Church desired to have schools of her own rather than public high schools or to patronize public high schools or to affiliate themselves with other churches in operating schools, were the following: The public schools did not provide the religious instruction which was considered vital for their children and young people. The influences in other schools were in many cases not regarded as wholesome to young people nor conducive to keeping them loyal to their own church. Ways and means of establishing and conducting their own schools were, therefore, sought as soon as possible.

a. *Bible Schools and High Schools.* The Canadian M. B. Church has been enthusiastic about having Bible Schools. In some cases these have been conducted by a School Association, "Schulverein," in other cases by one or more local churches or by a provincial conference. In one instance the M. B. Church cooperates with other Mennonite bodies in conducting a Bible School. Recently definite advance has been made in offering high school instruction. This has been done in several cases in conjunction with a Bible school; in some instances, however, a separate high school has been established and operated.

The report given in the year book for 1949 states that there are nine Bible Schools and five High Schools in operation, which are under the influence of the M. B. Church and which serve its constituency. These schools were attended in 1949 by 1216 students and the instruction was given by 65 teachers. The graduates in the Bible Schools totaled 100 and in the high schools 101. The instruction in these schools is given partly in English and partly in German. In the Bible Schools the school term is usually five months and the course is laid out for three years' instruction. In the high schools one term is for nine and a half months in order to meet the requirements of the educational department of the province.

The Bible School at Herbert, Saskatchewan, though closed temporarily at times, has continued to the present and serves the churches of that area. The student enrollment has ranged from 40 to 60. Since the leaving of W. J. Bestvater, the brethren Isaac Regehr and H. A. Regehr served the school for an extended period. Since their leaving other teachers have continued the work. At present instruction in high school classes is also offered.

Bethany Bible School at Hepburn, Saskatchewan, was established in 1927 and has largely served the churches of the surrounding area. Johann A. Toews, D. P. Esau, G. W. Peters, and J. H. Epp have taught a number of years in this school. The student enrollment has ranged from 50 to 85 students. In recent years this school has also begun to offer high school instruction.

Tabor Bible School at Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, begun in 1928, is an institution operated by several branches of Mennonites. The M. B. Church has usually been represented on the teaching staff and many of her young people have patronized the school as students. An M. B. Bible School was conducted at Glenbush, Saskatchewan, for several years, but was later discontinued. It should be mentioned that many students from M. B. Churches in Saskatchewan have also attended the Mennonite Academy at Rosthern, and that a large number of them have later entered the teaching profession. In recent years an increasing number of young people from the M. B. Church have also attended Saskatchewan University at Saskatoon in order to avail themselves of a higher education. Sometimes as many as thirty M. B. students attended this university.

The Peniel Bible School at Winkler, Manitoba, begun in 1925, has had an encouraging development and has played an important role in giving Biblical instruction to many young people in the churches of the province. A. H. Unruh and J. G. Wiens, the first teachers, have both served the school for many years. Bro. Unruh was the principal until 1944, when Bro. Wiens, who had been his assistant till then, became his successor. Since one year ago H. H. Redekopp who is assisted by a staff of able teachers serves as principal. A large and substantial school building was erected at the beginning, which has served its purpose well. More recently a large boarding hall has been procured, which houses the men-students coming from outside. The student enrollment has ranged from 70 to 100, nearly all of them coming from M. B. Churches in Manitoba.

A Bible School in which J. W. Reimer and Isaac Ediger taught, and which continued for some time was begun at Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1932. Later a community Bible School in which the local M. B. Church participated to some extent was organized by several branches of Mennonites.

The high school at Gretna, Manitoba, the earliest Mennonite school of its kind in Canada, has been well patronized by the Mennonite Brethren. At the 1946 Conference an extensive report of

this institution was submitted, which shows that 53 of the 155 students enrolled that year, came from the M. B. Church. Many of the young people educated at this school have become teachers in Mennonite circles. In recent years an increasing number of young people from the M. B. Church have attended the University in Winnipeg and other institutions of learning in order to prepare themselves for vocations where a higher education is required.

A Bible School which aims to fulfill a need in the M. B. Churches of southern Alberta was begun at Coaldale, Alberta in 1929. This school, which has constantly grown, had an enrollment of 100 students in 1949. For the past several years a Mennonite High School which is well attended by students from the M. B. Church is also being conducted in Coaldale. At Gem, Alberta, a Bible School in which the E. M. B. Church and the M. B. Church collaborate has been conducted for some time.

The M. B. Churches in the Frazer valley in British Columbia have, since their settlement began, established three Bible Schools. These are located at Yarrow, South Abbotsford, and Chiliwack, and are well attended by the young people of this growing community. Church High Schools have also been established at Yarrow and at North Abbotsford several years ago and large school buildings have been erected for this purpose. These schools receive pupils for the sixth class in the grade school and upward and teach them through high school. Both schools have had a very high enrollment since their beginning. The brethren F. C. Thiessen, C. C. Peters, J. F. Redekopp and others have rendered highly valued services in the M. B. schools of British Columbia.

The Eden Bible School and Academy at Virgil,, Ontario, has been conducted for several years under a school association. Instruction is offered in a regular Bible School course as well as in the high school grades. F. F. Kroeker has served the school as principal.

b. *The Mennonite Brethren Bible College.* For some time the need for a Bible College offering more advanced instruction than that given in the existing Bible schools was felt in the Conference. In 1943 it was decided by the Conference to take steps to meet this need by establishing such a College. The Peniel Bible School at Winkler, Manitoba, was requested to offer the first year of theological instruction on college level for the year 1943-'44. Meanwhile the possibilities for procuring a site or a suitable building in Winnipeg were surveyed. At the following Conference the Bible School Committee was in a position to recommend the pur-

chase of a suitable building for the college at 77 Kelvin Street, Winnipeg, and to establish there the intended Bible College. This recommendation was accepted by the Conference, and an Educational Board was elected and instructed to take steps to purchase the place and to open the College that fall. A. H. Unruh was elected president by the Conference and the required additional teachers were procured in due time, so that on October 19, 1944, the M. B. Bible College began with its first year of instruction at its present location.

The school has prospered during its five years of history. The funds required for the purchase of the property and for the maintenance and expansion of the school were solicited, and the institution as a property is at present valued at \$60,000. The enrollment of students has increased from year to year and for the year 1948-'49 it reached 143. The vast majority of students come from the M. B. Church, but a fair number have also been received from other churches. A. H. Unruh was in 1945 succeeded by J. B. Toews as president, who in 1948 was succeeded by H. H. Janzen. The aim of the Bible College is to offer the required instruction and training for Ministers and Christian workers in the churches and for missionaries on the Home and Foreign Mission Fields. The Bible College, therefore, offers the following courses of instruction: the Theological Course, leading to the Th. B. degree, the graduate of Theology Course, the Religious Education Course, the Missionary Course, and the Sacred Music Course. The Conference apparently manifests keen interest in the College and gives it a hearty support. A Christian high school, offering full high school instruction, is being conducted on the College campus, but as a separate institution and in a separate building.

7. Publication Activities and Provisions for the Welfare of the Young People

The Canadian M. B. Church has availed itself of the services of the M. B. Publishing House at Hillsboro, Kansas, in so far as it found this practical. The Sunday School Lesson Quarterlies and most of the other Sunday School material have been procured from there. The official General Conference organ, "Zionsbote," has, however, comparatively few subscribers in Canada. The "Christian Leader," likewise, has a rather small circle of readers there. The Canadian M. B. Conference, however, has not been inactive in matters of publication and the homes of the members are supplied with Christian literature.

a. *The "Mennonitische Rundschau" and the Christian Press.*

The "Mennonitische Rundschau," one of the earliest Mennonite publications on the American continent, was first published at Elkhart, Indiana, where it began in 1877. Later it was transferred to Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and in 1923 this publishing establishment was taken to Winnipeg. Here H. H. Neufeld, who had been assistant editor for three years, took over the "Rundschau" as publisher and editor. He also established a publishing house as a private enterprise, which received the name, "The Christian Press, Ltd."

In 1945 H. H. Neufeld discontinued as editor of the "Rundschau" and sold the Christian Press to a number of brethren. This business at the time had a value of \$34,000, consisting of 3400 shares of ten dollars each. These shares were sold to brethren who wished to invest in this publishing work. The Canadian M. B. Conference purchased 400 shares and thus became a joint-owner of the Press. The 727 shares owned by investors in the United States were purchased by the brethren and all the shares have by now been sold to stock holders from among the brethren in Canada.

The "Mennonitische Rundschau" has, since its transfer to Winnipeg, been published as a Christian weekly periodical in the German language and has become the most widely read paper in the homes of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada. H. F. Klassen has been editor since 1945. The "Christliche Jugendfreund," a small paper especially intended for children is also printed by the Christian Press and receives a wide circulation.

b. *"Konferenz Jugendblatt der M. B. Gemeinden in Kanada."*

Since 1945 the Conference has published a quarterly paper especially intended for the young people of the Church, the "Konferenz Jugendblatt der M. B. Gemeinden in Kanada." A Youth Committee of the Conference arranges for its publication and the Conference finances the project. H. F. Klassen serves as editor and is aided by several assistant editors. This paper, which is freely distributed in the churches, contains many articles and reports of especial interest to young people and is rich in pictorial illustrations. The periodical is printed in the German language, but sometimes contains articles in English.

c. *Other Provisions for the Welfare of the Young People.*

Definite progress has been made in the Sunday Schools of the churches. A. A. Kroeker, who represents Canada in the Sunday School Committee of the M. B. General Conference, has taken special pains to promote the cause of Sunday School work in the

churches. A Sunday School Committee of the Conference, representing the five provinces, works in collaboration with Bro. Kroeker. The Bible Schools have been instrumental in training many young people for more efficient teaching in the Sunday Schools. The problem of language is becoming more acute in some localities, for the Sunday Schools are conducted mostly in the German language and many of the young people and children do not have a reading knowledge of this language.

Christian Young People's Societies, "Jugendvereine," have been organized and are being conducted in practically all the churches. Summer youth retreat camps have been instituted in recent years in several of the provinces. Conferences for young people for each of the provinces have lately begun. These are usually held in the month of November. Since 1947 a special Young People's Conference has been held in connection with the annual Canadian M. B. Conference. This has been attended by a large number of young people and has been an active means of creating in them interest in the activities of the church.

Singing in the churches and the training of church choirs has received much attention in recent years. Ben Horch has at times visited the churches in the interest of church music and has rendered valued service in training for choir singing and congregational singing. For some time the need for an M. B. Church Hymnal in the German language has been agitated at the Conference sessions. A committee for selecting the hymns and for having the publication of the hymnal effected, was appointed, and the printing of such a hymnal is now under way.

8. The Mental Hospital "Bethesda"

For some time the need for a mental hospital was felt in the Canadian M. B. Church, and the matter was brought up for discussion at the Conference in 1933. No steps toward the establishing of such an institution were taken immediately. Meanwhile the Lord laid it upon the heart of Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Wiebe in Ontario to begin a mental hospital as a private enterprise. They had formerly worked in a mental hospital "Bethania" in the Ukraine, Russia, and had come to Canada in 1924. Having an understanding of the lot of the mentally ill and a strong desire to serve their Lord in this way, they consecrated themselves for such a service.

In 1932 they took the first patient into their home at Stratford, Ontario. To accommodate more patients, they purchased a

suitable farm near Vineland, Ontario, and arranged the large residence on the same so as to serve the purpose. The hospital was at first supported by voluntary contributions, by the proceeds from the farm, and by the monthly dues paid for the inmates. In 1944 the Ontario M. B. Conference purchased the place, had the institution registered with the government as a private sanitarium, and began to operate it as a conference project. In 1947 the Canadian M. B. Conference took over the mental hospital and made itself responsible for its support. A committee of eight members, in which all the provinces are represented, has since then been in charge of the hospital, appointing the superintendent and arranging for its continuation.

Bethesda Mental Hospital has usually been occupied to capacity and is full at present, having 22 patients. Besides the supervisors, Mr. and Mrs. H. Wiebe, a staff of four practical nurses, one orderly, and one part time registered nurse form the staff. A doctor makes regular visits for inspection and medical care of the patients. At present only "harmless" patients are admitted. The net proceeds from the farm help much in financing the hospital.

At the Conference in 1948 it was decided to solicit funds for constructing an adequate building which would meet government requirements and which would house 30 patients. The committee proceeded to collect the funds, and Mr. Wiebe procured the needed license for the new building. An additional tract of 19 acres land was also purchased and the new building is now under process of construction. The total value of the mental hospital as property is estimated by the Conference Trustees at \$85,000.

The need for a general hospital for the M. B. Church has some times been discussed at conference sessions. For some time the Manitoba churches had an affiliation with the Mennonite Hospital. "Concordia," in Winnipeg, but the Conference as a whole has never begun a general hospital project. The Home for the Aged, conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Hooze in Winkler, Manitoba, has been frequently reported of at the conferences and has received the moral support of the churches.

9. Other Activities and Problems of the M. B. Church in Canada

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada has been exceedingly active during the past twenty-five years. The long conferences with the keen interest in the deliberations, the extensive programs of work that were accepted, and the readiness for under-

taking new enterprises, are indications of the comprehensive outlook and of the wide scope of activities. Several activities, not yet touched in this chapter, should be mentioned and some of the problems that concern the M. B. Church should be noted.

a. *Relief, Settlement, and Economic Problems.* Relief work has been in the foreground in the Canadian M. B. Church during this entire period. In the earlier part, when the many immigrants arrived, there was much need for helping them, and the churches did what they could. Their brethren in the United States sent them much financial aid, as well as large quantities of clothing and other things. When the new settlers had established themselves and were no longer the recipients of aid, the whole church felt that it had a duty to fulfill toward others less fortunate and much relief work was done by the Canadian M. B. Church to alleviate the suffering in South America and in Europe. The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Committee on General Welfare of the M. B. General Conference have frequently presented the need at the annual conference and have had good response.

Problems relating to the settlement of the newly arrived immigrants at times became difficult and acute. The vast majority of them wished to settle on farms and it was difficult to find suitable farm-land which could be purchased at reasonable prices and under acceptable terms of payment. The Canadian Mennonite Board for Colonization has rendered highly valuable service to many in assisting them wherever possible. Some have, however, resettled several times before they found a suitable location. On the whole there has been much shifting about among the Mennonite Brethren in Canada during the past quarter century.

The economic problems have been as a whole rather acute during the greater part of this period. For those who had immigrated there was, in addition to settling and establishing a home, the duty of paying off the debts for transportation from Europe to Canada. Most of them were conscientious and paid their accounts as soon as they could. The exhortation to pay off the "Reiseschuld," however, had to be repeated at conference from year to year until very recently. Though the term became repugnant to many, the matter had to be brought to the delinquent ones repeatedly. The brethren who have served on the committee and handled this matter carefully and wisely deserve the recognition and gratitude of the whole Mennonite community in Canada.

The economic situation became especially acute in the arid sections of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Here there were repeated

crop failures due to drought and the grasshopper plague, and many farmers became dependent upon the government for relief. Many M. B. families in this area moved to other parts of Canada because of these conditions. The M. B. Churches in Saskatchewan have decreased 28 per cent in membership during the past seven years.

b. *The Second World War and the M. B. Church.* When the second World War broke out in 1939, the M. B. Church in Canada soon found itself confronted with new problems. The brethren endeavored to remain true to the teachings of Scripture with reference to a Christian's attitude toward participation in warfare, and at the same time desired to do their duty toward their country. The government was as considerate as could be expected under war circumstances. Most of the young men from the M. B. Church, when called for service, chose to do civilian public service for which provision was made. Some agreed to do non-combatant service in connection with the army.

For the churches a new sphere of ministry was opened,—that of providing for the spiritual needs of the young men in C. P. S. camps. The whole question of the Christian's participation in warfare has been before the M. B. Church in recent years and the Conference has elected a committee, "Komitee fuer Weltfrage," which is to study the matter carefully and to give advice.

c. *The Mennonite Immigration since 1947.* About 5400 Mennonites have immigrated into Canada since the beginning of 1947. Nearly all of them were of the displaced person's class, coming from Europe, but some came also from South America and a few from China. Their coming has presented to the M. B. Church, as well as to other Mennonite bodies, new opportunities for lending a helping hand and manifesting the love of Christ as well as new duties in caring for their needs. Many members of the churches have supplied the travel allowance for individuals or for whole families and have guaranteed the employment of those coming across. Though there appear to be problems and matters of concern involved with their coming which were not there when the large groups came two decades ago, the churches are courageously grappling with the situation and the hope is expressed that this new influx of Mennonites will not only mean numerical growth to the church but also be a definite asset in the building up of the church.

d. *The Canadian M. B. Conference in her Relation to the M. B. General Conference.* There has always existed a close and brotherly relationship between the Canadian M. B. Conference and the

M. B. General Conference. The Canadian Conference has sought to abide by the decisions of the General Conference, to cooperate in its activities, and to bear her share of responsibility. The higher bond of unity in Christ is felt among all the M. B. churches in North America and has not been weakened through geographical distances or national distinctions.

In foreign mission efforts the Canadian M. B. Conference has shown much zeal and has energetically supported the large mission program of the General Conference. A high proportion of missionaries now on the M. B. Mission fields comes from Canada and many candidates for the foreign field, now in preparation, reside there. In financial support, too, the Canadian M. B. Churches have contributed liberally for foreign missions.

Nearly twenty years ago the Africa Mission Society was organized. The members of this organization were scattered throughout the M. B. Churches from Ontario to Alberta. This society sent two missionary families to the Belgian Congo, Africa, and took over a field known as the Bololo Field. The mission was continued under the direction of this society until 1943, when it was dissolved and the mission was taken over by the M. B. General Conference and since then full collaboration of all the M. B. Churches in Canada with the foreign mission efforts of the General Conference has been in evidence.

PART THREE

The Mennonite Brethren Church and Its Missions in Other Lands

CHAPTER XIII

THE A. M. B. MISSION AND THE TELUGU M. B. CHURCH IN INDIA 1899-1949

The history of the Mennonite Brethren Church would not be complete without treating its mission activities in other lands and without giving due consideration to the indigenous church planted in these lands through the missions. American M. B. Missions which have resulted in establishing indigenous M. B. Churches in the respective fields have been carried on in India, China and Africa. To South America the M. B. Church has been transplanted through immigration from Europe and this has led to the formation of an M. B. Church which has the traditional Mennonite background in Paraguay and Brazil. At the same time foreign missions among the natives of this continent have begun to give rise to indigenous churches among them. The Mennonite Brethren Church in these lands, therefore, bears a close relation to the M. B. Church in North America as well as to the earlier M. B. Church in Russia.

In Part Two we have repeatedly referred to the foreign mission effort of the Conference of the M. B. Church of North America. In those connections we have dealt with matters concerning foreign missions, as they pertain to the Conference—the organization for mission work, the taking over of mission fields, the accepting and sending forth of missionaries, the financial support of missions, and the general supervision of foreign missions on the part of the Conference. The Mission among the Comanche Indians and Mexicans in Oklahoma, and the Mission to Russians were sufficiently dealt with in Part Two, since these fields were within the confines of the North American Continent, and are, therefore, not repeated in this part.

In this and the following chapters we shall consider the M. B. Foreign Missions of the several fields—the coming of missionaries, the taking over and occupation of fields, the building or pro-

curing of mission stations, the work of evangelism and the building of an indigenous church, the founding of institutions and the conducting of institutional work, and matters related to the respective missions in general.

The first foreign mission work done by the M. B. Church was carried on in India. The Mission begun by Abraham Friesen from the brethren in Russia, when he, in 1890, began the Russian M. B. Mission among the Telugus of the Nalgonda Field in South India, is the earliest foreign mission effort. The historical course of this Mission has been briefly treated in Chapter III, Section 4. The American Mennonite Brethren Mission among the Telugus of South India, which commenced in 1899, and the resultant Telugu Mennonite Church, shall be the subject under consideration in this chapter.

1. Beginning of the M. B. Mission to the Telugus of India 1899-1919

a. *The Coming of the First Missionaries.* The American M. B. Conference accepted Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Hiebert and Elizabeth Neufeld as its first missionaries to India. This party proceeded to India in the summer of 1899, arriving in the Hyderabad State in October of that year. Anna Suderman, a member of the M. B. Church, who had gone to India the previous year and was working in a mission in the Bombay Presidency, felt led of the Lord to come and join the group of M. B. missionaries. She was formally accepted by the Conference in 1899, and so the four formed the first group of M. B. missionaries in India.

Since the M. B. Church in Russia had already begun its mission to the Telugus in the eastern part of the Hyderabad State and had established its main station at Nalgonda, the American M. B. missionaries proceeded there. These brethren received the new missionaries into their homes and assisted them where possible. The American M. B. Missionaries, intending to open a mission in the Telugu language area, at once began the study of this language. Soon they were able to establish a home for themselves at Hughestown, a suburb lying between the cities Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

b. *The Choice of a Field.* As soon as possible Bro. Hiebert investigated the possibilities for taking over a field for the intended A. M. B. Mission. He conferred with missionaries of other missions. The American Baptist Telugu Mission, which had al-

ready established several stations in the Telugu area of the Hyderabad State, felt that the field which they regarded as their own was larger than they could cover. They, therefore, gladly agreed that the A. M. B. Conference take over an area south of Hyderabad city as its field. Efforts were also made to procure a suitable place for a mission station within the environs of Hyderabad or Secunderabad.

Before a place for the intended mission station could be procured, a severe trial befell the young Mission. After a stay in India of eighteen months, Bro. Hiebert became seriously ill so that he and his family had to leave for the homeland. This was rather disappointing to the missionaries as well as to the churches at home, but at the same time it led to more earnest prayer on the part of



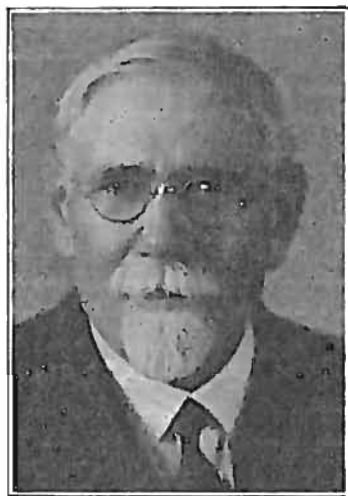
N. N. Hiebert

many. The sisters, Neufeld and Suderman continued on the field, temporarily assisting at the Nalgonda Station.

c. *The Sending Forth of More Missionaries and the Occupation of the Field.* Trials and disappointments could not daunt the M. B. Church in its foreign mission effort. The leading brethren firmly believed that the mission, begun in India, was of the Lord and that God was for them. Upon the return of the Hiebert family, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Pankratz were sent as missionaries to India in 1902. They arrived on the field in October.

After prayerful investigation, a place for a mission station was found and purchased at Mulkapet, an important suburb of Hyderabad, lying to the southeast of the city. On Thanksgiving Day, 1903, the Pankratz family and the sisters Suderman and Neufeld moved into this mission home.

Several native evangelists from Nalgonda and from other places were willing to come to join the missionaries for the proclamation of the Gospel in this field. Aggressive evangelism was at once undertaken in the suburbs of the city as well as in villages to the south. The Lord graciously blessed the testimony of His witnesses and some souls were won for Christ. On March, 27, 1904, the missionaries, some native workers, and a few new converts met in prayer and on this occasion organized themselves as the first Mennonite Brethren Church in India. In 1904 Miss Neufeld began a school for the Telugu children, having the classes at first under a large shade tree. Miss Suderman found open doors for ministering to the sick and suffering and for doing personal work among women.



J. H. Pankratz

The Mission experienced a gradual and continuous increase in the number of mission workers. In the fall of 1904, Mr. and D. F. Bergthold arrived. A severe trial almost immediately came to this family, when after six weeks the sister contracted smallpox and passed away to be with her Lord. Some time later Brother Bergthold was united in marriage with Miss Anna Epp, an M. B. missionary from Russia. They began the second mission station at the large village Nagar Kurnool, eighty miles south of Hyderabad. Here they procured a site for a station, erected a bungalow, a hall for school and church purposes, and other required buildings.

They undertook extensive evangelistic work in the surrounding villages and the Lord blessed the gospel message so that heathen turned from darkness unto light. After a number of converts had been baptized, a church was organized which has shown an encouraging growth. Soon a mission school was opened on this station.

The family passed through a deep grief in September, 1915, when the second Sister Bergthold was summoned to her heavenly home, leaving the brother alone with six small children. The Lord, however, wonderfully sustained Brother Bergthold and enabled him to continue in the work.



D. F. Bergthold

With the coming of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Voth in October, 1908, further advance was possible. Their aspirations were directed toward Deverakonda, a large village sixty five miles southeast of Hyderabad. Here they found a very responsive field, in which workers from Nalgonda had already begun to proclaim the Gospel and some converts had been won. Through the zealous efforts of Brother and Sister Voth and the Lord's blessing resting upon them, many of the Telugus were saved and an indigenous church was established which grew rapidly. After prolonged efforts, sanction for a mission station was obtained and the needed buildings were erected. A school was begun to which the children soon flocked in large numbers.

The Mission was privileged to experience further growth, when in the fall of 1910, Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Janzen arrived. They subsequently established a fourth mission station at Wanaparty, a town of some importance twenty miles southeast of Nagarkurnool. Here they found a large field responsive to the Gospel, which they began to evangelize. The Lord graciously blessed the testimony of His servants, souls came into a saving faith in Christ, and a growing church was the result of their labors. The most essential buildings were erected on the station premises and a school was opened as soon as possible.

d. *Single Missionary Sisters and Their Ministry.* Single sisters have usually constituted a fair proportion of the total number



J. H. Voth

of missionary workers on the M. B. Mission Field in India. They have done an important and excellent work. Of the two sisters mentioned before, Miss Neufeld stayed on the field one term. She found her place of service in the Mulkapet school, which she supervised until 1905. Miss Suderman devoted herself chiefly to ministering among the sick of the same station until 1916, when she was united in marriage to D. F. Berthold. Thereafter, she and her husband worked together on the Nagar-Kurnool field until 1946.

In March, 1907, Katharina Schellenberg, a medical doctor, arrived. Her early services were at Nagar-Kurnool, where the mission built its first hospital in 1912. Katharina Lohrenz, prepared for the ministry of teaching, came in the fall of 1908. To her was assigned the Mulkapet school, which was built up into a strong

primary school. Her brief span of service was completed, when in September, 1913, she had a severe attack of typhoid fever and was called to her heavenly home.

By the coming of Anna Hanneman, in the summer of 1915, the vacancy in the Mulkapet school, caused by the death of Miss Lohrenz, was again filled. Mary C. Wall, a trained nurse, coming at the same time, was placed in charge of the medical work at De-verakonda. Here she has spent the greater part of her life in a blessed ministry of healing among the sick and is still engaged in this service.

e. *Testings Experienced by the Mission.* The M. B. Mission in India was destined to pass through several severe testings and



F. A. Janzen

trials during the first two decades of its history. Some of these affected the missionaries personally, others the work on the field. Cases of severe sickness among the workers and their children have occurred. The death of three missionaries, as has already been mentioned, and of several children, were some of the trials which these messengers of the Cross had to pass through, during the pioneer stages of the Mission.

Strong opposition from those who were hostile to the spread of the Christian religion sometimes made the work very difficult, and these experiences were very trying to the missionaries. Occasionally disturbances occurred when the missionary was on tour, which made the open street preaching at times almost impossible.

Frequently it was very difficult to place native evangelists in the villages and to establish outstations. On several occasions these workers were beaten, the houses they had begun to erect were destroyed, and they were driven from the village. Cases where early converts suffered floggings or endured severe persecutions occurred frequently. All the missionaries of this time, as well as those of later years, have had their full share of trials and difficulties.

The Mission was deeply affected when complicated circumstances made it imperative to dispose of the Mulkapet station in 1913 and to seek another place. Suitable premises were found in Hughestown, a suburb in the northeastern part of Hyderabad city, to which the missionaries shifted with the station work. Here three compounds were purchased, two of which contained dwelling houses for missionaries and for native workers, and one suitable for church services and school purposes.

With this transfer to Hughestown Mr. and Mrs. Pankratz were able to continue the work of their field. Miss Hanneman was stationed here and entrusted with the charge of the school. Dr. Schellenberg at this time left Nagar-Kurnool and took over the medical work at Hughestown. Since the vicinity of Hughestown proved to be badly infested with malaria, which became very trying to the missionaries, the shifting of this station to another locality was again considered after several years.

The first World War brought its testings to the Mission. The main difficulty was that new missionaries could not go out and that the workers on the field, as a result, were obliged to stay overtime. The work at a very opportune time was greatly retarded through lack of a sufficient number of missionaries.

During the years 1918-1920 famine conditions prevailed throughout the whole area of the mission field and necessitated much relief work. This placed upon the smaller number of missionaries additional burdens and further responsibilities. Much suffering, was, however, alleviated; many widows and old people were taken care of, orphans and other destitute children were taken into the schools, where they were fed, clothed and educated. This ministry of charity and benevolence became the means to open the doors for the spread of the Gospel and enhanced the growth of the church. It, however, also created economic problems, with which the mission later had to cope as they affected the building up of the indigenous church. India's dire poverty, with many people always on the verge of starvation, has necessitated a continuation of relief work also in later years.

f. *Establishing the Work of the Mission.* The period covered by the years 1902-1919 is important in the history of the Mission in several ways. The work was established on a basis whereby it could expand and prosper in later times. Four main mission stations had been established and a school had begun on each of them. A considerable area of the field was occupied and reached with the Gospel, and outstations were planted in many of the large, strategic villages.

The working policy, according to which the Mission has later largely continued, was laid down at this time. Direct evangelism, with continuous preaching on extensive tours, was strongly stressed and done by all the missionaries. The need of schools in the normal development of a Christian community was understood, and these received their due attention. India, a land of much sickness and many diseases and at the same time with very inadequate provision for medical care, obviously led the missionaries to realize the dire need and the great opportunity for showing the love of Christ in a ministry of healing.

The four brethren, Pankratz, Bergthold, Voth, and Janzen, who were on the field during this time, have truly performed a tremendous work. As pioneers they have laid the foundation for an indigenous church — the Telugu Mennonite Brethren Church. Their interests, their strength, their prayers, their love, yea, their life, were built into the structure of the M. B. Mission in India.

The Lord in His grace visibly blessed the efforts of the early missionaries and of their co-workers from among the nationals. As a result of the continuous preaching of the Gospel hundreds were saved and through baptism added to the church. The reports for 1918 show a total of 2100 members in all the Telugu M. B. Churches of the field. In this year the Telugu Christians and missionaries met for the first time as a Convention. This Convention, which corresponds to the church conferences in America, has since met annually and has become the organization through which the Telugu Mennonite Brethren Church of the whole mission field finds its expression.

The appointing, training, and stationing of indigenous Christian workers was a matter with which the early missionaries concerned themselves and which they regarded as very important. Several of the first workers on each of the stations were those who came from other missions. As soon as some of the more promising pupils of the schools had completed their course, they were encouraged to consecrate themselves for definite service for their Lord

and go for further preparation to some other school. Many young men attended the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ramapatnam during these years. The majority of these men were married and their wives received training for work among women and children. Some of the men who received preparation in this seminary later became leaders in the Telugu M. B. Church.

With the increase in the number of missionaries the need for a rest home on a hill station arose. A suitable place for this purpose was purchased at Ootacamund, in the Nilgiri Hills, five hundred miles south of the mission field. The two houses were arranged so as to provide for three household suites. To this place of retreat, missionaries can go for a short stay during the most trying part of the hot season, for rest, recuperation, and spiritual uplift. New missionaries, while at language study, may reside here for a longer time. Since in early years nearly all the missionaries' children of school age attended schools in the Nilgires, the stay on the "Hills" for the hot season made it possible for parents and children to be together more.

2. Growth of the M. B. Mission and of the Telugu M. B. Church 1919-1936

The years 1919-1936 constitute a time of continuous growth and expansion for the M. B. Mission in India. The area of the field was extended, three more stations were opened, new missionaries arrived and older ones returned from furlough, and all the phases of work, evangelism, education, and hospital service had a definite increase.

a. *Expansion of the Field and New Opportunities.* In 1920 land was procured and sanction was obtained for the construction of a mission station at Shamshabad, an important village near the railway station, Umdanagar, ten miles southwest of Hyderabad. The intention at this time was to dispose of the property at Hughestown and to build up a complete station at Shamshabad instead. The reason for this shifting was the malignant malaria prevalent at Hughestown. The school and the hospital work were immediately shifted to Shamshabad.

Of the three compounds at Hughestown, the one with the church and school building was sold in 1926 and five years later the compound with the ladies' bungalow. The one with the large mission bungalow was kept. Since the American Baptist Mission turned over to the A. M. B. Mission a fairly large area of their

Secunderabad field, the part south of the Musi River, and since sanitary conditions at Hughestown had improved, the M. B. Mission decided to retain Hughestown as a separate station, divide the field into two parts, and develop both stations, Shamshabad and Hughestown. The Musi formed from now on the northern boundary of the M. B. Mission Field.

A separate field for another station was established at Kalva-Kurthy in 1922, and sanction for a mission station was sought and procured after several years' delay. Kalva-Kurthy is an important village, twenty miles northeast of Nagar-Kurnool or thirty miles due west of Deverakonda. Here a dwelling house for missionaries and several smaller buildings have been erected. The villagers have shown a good response to the message of the Gospel and a number of out-stations with flourishing local churches have developed.

The American Baptist Mission also gave over the Janumpet Field, which lies southwest of the Shamshabad Field and adjoins it. The site they had procured for a mission station they sold to the A. M. B. Mission. For several years the work at Janumpet was conducted as a separate station, but in 1940 the station site, Janumpet with the northwestern part of the field was merged with the Shamshabad field, and the southeastern part with the Kalva-Kurthy field.

b. Increase of the Staff of Missionaries. At the close of the year 1919 the M. B. Mission in India numbered eleven active missionaries: two families and three single sisters on the field and two families on furlough. During the period 1919-1936 five families and three single sisters were added to the staff, all of whom served many years, and most of them are still in the work.

In the summer of 1920 Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Lohrenz and Miss Helen Warkentin arrived. After some service at Nagar-Kurnool and Kalva-Kurthy, Mr. and Mrs. Lohrenz were stationed at Shamshabad. Here they erected most of the buildings on the station, supervised the work of the field, and for a number of years also had charge of the Hughestown and Janumpet fields. Miss Warkentin was assigned to the school at Deverakonda, where she has served as principal for many years.

Mr. and Mrs. P. V. Balzer came to India in the fall of 1923. The Lord had for them a sphere of fruitful labor, chiefly at the stations Deverakonda, Wanaparty and Kalva-Kurthy, and later again at Deverakonda. In fall, 1927, the mission was privileged to get new

workers in Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wiebe. Their early years of service have been chiefly at Deverakonda, Nagar-Kurnool, Kalva-Kurthy and Janumpet.

The fall of 1929 brought additional workers to the field in Mr. and Mrs. J. N. C. Hiebert. The Lord used them in His service at Wanaparty, Nagar-Kurnool, and Kalva-Kurthy. For one year they lived at Hughestown and had charge of that field. Miss Margaret Suderman, a medical worker, who arrived a few weeks later, was assigned to hospital work at Wanaparty. Here the medical service experienced a remarkable expansion through her efforts. Miss Catherine Reimer, a trained nurse, arriving in January, 1931, rendered one term of useful hospital service, first at Deverakonda and later at Nagar-Kurnool.

c. Progress in Evangelism and in Establishing the Indigenous Church. The Lord has prospered His work during the years, 1919-1936 in a most wonderful way. While the brethren in the homeland continued to intercede in prayer and to give their God-entrusted means, while the missionaries on the field labored on, and while the Christian workers from the Telugu Church continued to bear their witness, the Lord bountifully bestowed His blessings from above.

Definite evangelism continued to hold the central place in all activity and to engage the major part of the missionaries' attention, time, and strength. The message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was pressed home among all classes; in the midst of the high caste Hindus as well as in the hamlets of the down-trodden out-castes. In earlier years practically all the converts came from the out-caste community, but during this period a number of Caste Hindus confessed Christ and were received into the church through baptism. The reports available from these years tell of many baptismal services. In 1936 the Telugu M. B. Church numbered 7000 members.

Establishing and organizing the church received special attention. Groups of village Christians were instructed in the Word and united into local churches with the most simple organization. In several of the fields annual Field Associations were begun, where as many of the Christians attended as possible. At these gatherings the believers were built up in their spiritual life and were united more into a Christian community. The Telugu M. B. Convention, representing all the local churches of the entire mission area, continued to convene annually, growing in importance and assuming more responsibility.

In evangelistic tours, in winning the individual villagers to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior, in instructing them in the rudiments of the Christian faith, and in building them up as a group in worship and church life, the indigenous Christian worker fills a most important place. Nearly all the evangelists, preachers, and teachers entering definite service for their Master during this period were the product of the M. B. Mission. Some of them have proved to be very faithful workers for a period of many years.

Some of the most outstanding Indian leaders since the beginning of the Mission have been the following: J. Levi, V. Abraham, G. S. Douglas, and V. L. Benjamin, who have had a record of service of thirty five or more years in the Hughestown Shamshabad field; K. Johan, Aaron Kelly, T. Ezra, and R. David, who have done an abiding work at Nagar-Kurnool; G. Samuel, G. Gamaliel, T. S. Rangiah, and G. S. Albert, who have been leading workers in Deverakonda; and C. Abraham, G. John, and M. Elisha, who have rendered valued service at Wanaparty. The native evangelist preacher, who is faithful and true to his Lord, holds the key to successful evangelism in rural India.

The missionaries and Indian leaders sought to implant the blessedness of giving in the Telugu Church. Many have joyfully contributed for the Lord's work and the churches began to support their preachers and teachers at least in part. Since 1924 the Telugu M. B. Convention has assumed the responsibility for the evangelization of its own Home Mission Field, an area with 34 villages which was formerly the northeast corner of the Kalva-Kurthy field. R. Rathnam, and his wife have been the workers of this field since the beginning. A local church of 80 members has evolved and a village school has been conducted almost from the beginning.

d. *Advance in Institutional Work.* The missionaries have sought to understand the value of institutional work in furthering evangelism and in building up the church, and they have endeavoured to retain the proper correlation between direct evangelism and the work in hospitals, schools and publication.

Medical service continued to receive due attention. Those sisters who were especially prepared for this service devoted their full time to it. In addition to the hospital at Nagar-Kurnool already mentioned, three more hospitals were built during this period; one at Shamshabad, one at Deverakonda and one at Wanaparty. Many thousands of India's suffering ones have come to the hospitals of the Mission and received healing for their body. At the

same time they heard the Gospel of Love and of redemption from sin. Not a few have as a result come to a saving faith in Christ.

The importance of education was realized and definite advance was made therein. The school at Shamshabad continued to grow under the principalship of Miss Hanneman and developed into a duly recognized middle school; the one at Deverakonda, under the direction of Miss Warkentin, likewise grew and received middle school recognition. The schools at Nagar-Kurnool and Wanaparty increased and in the course of time the middle school classes were added. The arrangement of having co-educational mission schools on the stations with boarding hostels for the boys and for the girls, was probably the best provision that could be made to meet the educational needs of the Christian community. Though the method had its defects, the results have, in the main, been encouraging. These schools have been an asset in building up the indigenous church. Many of the boys and girls have later become useful workers for Christ.

The need for training native workers for evangelism, church work, and teaching, led the missionaries to begin a Bible School in the summer of 1920. The purpose of the school was to give Biblical instruction to the young men and young women who obeyed the call for Christ's service. The three-year course of instruction was designed to prepare the students for Christian work in the villages.

In early years Brother Bergthold and Brother Pankratz had charge of the Bible School. From 1930 to 1945 it was continued at Shamshabad under the charge of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Lohrenz. At this time it received the name Bethany Bible School. Many young people have availed themselves of the opportunity to attend this school. The blessing of the Lord has manifestly rested upon this undertaking, for the school has supplied most of the Christian workers of the M. B. Mission since 1920.

The value of the printed page in mission effort was realized by the missionaries from the beginning. Extensive use was made of the supply of Telugu Bibles and Scripture portions published by the British and Foreign Bible Society and sold at a very reasonable price. The vernacular publications of the Christian Literature Society in Madras and of the publishing houses of other missions have been found helpful.

In 1920 the A. M. B. Mission began its own monthly publication, "The Suvarthamani," (Gospel Messenger), under the management of J. H. Voth with the editorial assistance of Indian

brethren. This periodical has become the official organ of the Telugu M. B. Church and has proved to be a definite help to the readers. Brother Voth also had the Confession of Faith of the M. B. Church translated into Telugu and published as well as the two booklets, "Biblische Grundwahrheiten," written by H. F. Toews. "Telugu Gospel Songs," a selection of Telugu songs and choruses compiled by Mrs. Lohrenz was printed in 1934 and was made much use of in station churches and schools.

3. Expansion of the M. B. Mission and the Establishing of the Telugu M. B. Church. 1936-1949

a. *The Area of the Field Extended.* In 1936 the American Baptist Foreign Mission found itself compelled to retrench on its Telugu field in India, and, therefore, offered to the A. M. B. Mission several of their stations and fields in the Deccan, bordering on the M. B. field. The M. B. Foreign Mission Board, with the approval of the General Conference, agreed to take over the stations and fields, Mahbubnagar and Gadwal, purchasing the property in question at a nominal price. These two fields were bordering on the southwest of what was then the M. B. Mission Field. The transfer was made without difficulty, the many Baptist church members readily united with the M. B. churches in fellowship, and the missionaries taking over the charge of the work were welcomed by all.

With this transfer a plot of sixty five acres of land at Jadcharla was included. Jadcharla is an important railroad station at the junction of several highways, ten miles east of Mahbubnagar. This land, which many years ago was used as a mission station, may in the future become useful to the M. B. Mission for institutional work. A hospital compound in Mahbubnagar was later purchased from the Baptist Mission. This may become useful for expansion of the work at Mahbubnagar.

With the addition of Mahbubnagar and Gadwal the borders of the M. B. Mission Field have been completed in a very satisfactory way. The whole field forms one united block, with a railroad traversing the same from north to south and four of the eight mission stations located on this line. Gravelled highways also connect all the stations except one.

In the gradual extension of the field we can clearly see God's wonderful guidance and provision. As the M. B. Church grew in strength and the number of missionaries increased, the Lord ex-

panded the borders of the field. Every step in the expansion could be taken without infringing upon the interests of neighboring missions or violating principles of inter-mission comity. The Lord has wonderfully entrusted to the A. M. B. Mission a field of 10,000 square miles in area, having 1,500,000 inhabitants, and He expects the Mission to do its best to bring the saving Gospel of His Son to all.

b. *The Lord's Provision of More Workers.* During the years 1937-1939 a number of missionaries returned from furlough and new ones came. Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Wiebe, upon returning, were entrusted with the charge of the Mahbubnagar station. Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Unruh, arrived as new missionaries in January, 1937. To them was assigned the work of the Gadwal station. Miss Anna Suderman, a new worker, came in the fall of the same year. To her was assigned the Wanaparty school, of which she has since served as principal.

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Pankratz, after a period of twelve years' absence from the field, returned at the close of the year, 1938. They once more resumed the work of the Hughestown station with energy and devotion. Their time of service, however, was short, for in January, 1941, the Lord took Sister Pankratz unto Himself. Brother Pankratz felt the loss keenly and after four months returned to America. Mrs. F. A. Janzen, who had been absent from the field ten years, returned to India in 1938. For several years she had charge of the hospital and work among women in Nagar-Kurnool. Later she was stationed at Hughestown, where she conducted the primary school and did evangelistic work among women in the city.

Other missionaries returned from furlough so that all the stations could be supplied with resident missionaries for a short time at least. During the cool season of 1938-'39, when the number of missionaries on the field was at the highest it has ever been, there were twenty-three.

In the early years the missionaries organized themselves as a Missionary Conference and have usually convened as a whole group twice annually. The purpose of the Conference is to offer spiritual help and fellowship to the missionaries and their children and to dispose of all essential business which concerns the whole Mission. This Missionary Conference has been a definite blessing to the Mission and has been of value in developing the work of the Mission as a united whole. Recently the name of the Conference has been changed to Missionary Council.

c. *The Prosperous Continuation of the Work.* The thirteen years of mission effort since 1936 mark a period of prosperity, of further expansion, and of advance and consolidation. Evangelism has continued to hold uppermost place in the work and has been stressed constantly. Many were won for Christ and added to the church through baptism. The annual report given for the fiscal year, July, 1939, to June, 1940, gives the number of additions to the church through baptism as 964, and for the following year the report shows 933 additions. The Telugu M. B. Church in India at present numbers approximately 13,000 members.

In education the Mission has moved forward during recent years. Middle schools, which gave instruction in eight grades, have usually been conducted on three or four of the stations, and primary schools, which have only five classes, have usually been conducted on the other stations. The total enrollment in all these schools has in recent years been well over 900 pupils. In some fields primary evening schools have been stressed and conducted with good success by the village preachers and Bible women.

The Bethany Bible School was shifted from Shamshabad to Deverakonda in 1946 where Mr. and Mrs. P. V. Balzer have had charge of it since. This Bible School has been instrumental in training nearly all the Christian workers, who have entered the Lord's service in connection with the M. B. Mission since 1920. About 400 such workers serve today as evangelists, village preachers, teachers and Biblewomen.

For some time the need of providing education above middle school was felt by missionaries and was strongly urged by leaders of the Indian church. In 1943 first year high school was added to the Shamshabad middle school and in 1946 the Missionary Council decided to develop the school at Shamshabad as a High School to serve the whole Mission, and to offer also second year instruction. Mrs. Lohrenz continued to have charge of this school till going on furlough in the spring of 1947, when Miss Emma Lepp was put in charge. At present Brother J. N. C. Hiebert is entrusted with the work of the high school which was shifted to Mahbubnagar in the summer of 1949.

Medical work has in recent years been continued not only in the four hospitals but has also been extended to other stations as far as possible. A recent forward step was the opening of medical work at Gadwal. The opening of a leper asylum in the area of the Mission has received thoughtful consideration in recent years. A keenly felt loss was sustained by the Mission, when on January

first, 1945, Dr. K. L. Schellenberg died rather suddenly. She had rendered thirty-seven years of effective service on the field.

The Mission has progressed in publication work since 1936. A printing press was procured and since then the Mission has printed its own publication. The brethren Bergthold, Wiebe, and Unruh have had charge of the press during the greater part of the time. In addition to the publishing of the "*Suvarthamani*," the "*Harvest Field*," a quarterly paper, was published for a number of years. The "*Sahayapatti*," a Guide for Village Workers, is prepared by a committee and is printed twice a year. This booklet contains helps and lesson plans to guide village workers, in conducting their services and evening schools.

Several books, written by missionaries, have appeared in Telugu in recent years. "*The Doctrinal Teachings of the Bible*" Part I, written by J. H. Lohrenz, and "*Guide to the Study of the Old Testament*," Part I and Part II, by Mrs. Lohrenz, are intended mainly for study texts among Christian workers and in schools. Brother J. J. Dick has translated the Mennonite Catechism and had it printed. This is used much in station schools as well as in village schools.

d. *World War II and the Mission.* The outbreak of World War II in September, 1939, brought new testings and difficulties to the Mission. Prospects for getting new missionaries were gone for some time. The two families, D. F. Bergthold, and J. J. Dick, were able to return to the field during the early part of the war. Communications with the homeland were almost completely severed for some time. The Lord, however, never failed to provide for His servants and His work continued, though the nations were raging.

A special testing came in 1942. Two missionary families left for furlough during the year. When the Japanese invasion threatened India, the American Consulate strongly advised that all Americans, especially women with children and others who could, should leave the country. Two families left as a result of this advice. Since only four families and the single sisters remained, it meant that each family had to take over the charge of two stations. By this arrangement the Mission did not need to retrench or close down any of its work.

e. *The Outlook for the Mission since the War.* The Mission received new encouragement, when with the close of the war, better communications were resumed and when missionaries could again come to the field. The first to return were Mr. and Mrs. P. V.

Balzer, who after a tedious voyage, with prolonged periods of waiting in several ports, finally arrived in August, 1945. Their much needed assistance was welcomed and they were stationed at Deverakonda.

In March, 1946, all were gladdened by the arrival of a party of six missionaries. Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Unruh, who returned, were assigned to the Mahbubnagar station. Of the four new missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. J. Kasper were entrusted with the charge of Nagar-Kurnool station, Miss Emma Lepp with the middle school at Shamshabad, and Miss Helen Harder with the hospital at Shamshabad.

It was a rather pleasant surprise for the missionaries, when in October, 1946, three new workers arrived by plane. They were the sisters Margaret Willems and Edna Gerdes, who have been stationed at Gadwal, and Rozella Toews, who has been put in charge of the school at Deverakonda. In January, 1947, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Warkentin arrived. They have been stationed at Kalva-Kurthy, and are in charge of that field.

A further group of missionaries reached the field in January, 1948. This included Mr. and Mrs. J. N. C. Hiebert, who were placed at Shamshabad but were later transferred to Mahbubnagar; Mary C. Wall, who again resumed her work in the Deverakonda hospital; and Miss Margaret Suderman who again took charge of the hospital at Wanaparty. The two new sisters, Mildred Enns and Mary Doerksen have been stationed at Nagar-Kurnool. Miss Anna Suderman returned in summer, 1948, and resumed the work of the middle school at Wanaparty. Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Studebaker, new missionaries, are at present engaged in the study of the language. There are at present twenty-two missionaries on the field and seven in America on furlough.

The missionaries as well as the Indian Church have at times experienced the joy of having visitors from abroad. The first such visit occurred in 1923 when Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Hofer, K. M. B. city missionaries from Chicago, visited the Mission. H. J. Braun, missionary from China, stopped for a short visit in 1927; and Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Schrag, also missionaries from China, in 1931. Brother P. P. Baltzer, while on a deputation for relief work, found it possible to pay a short visit to the Mission in 1945. During the winter of 1948-'49 Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Warkentin spent four months on the field, at which time they also built a village church in Kalva-Kurthy.

Early in 1949 the Mission had the rare privilege of having Brother A. E. Janzen, the executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, for a visit and he was present for the celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary since the M. B. Church decided to begin the Mission in India. It was also at this time that the hill station premises in Kodai-Kanal, South India, were bought.

f. *The Telugu Mennonite Brethren Church.* The A. M. B. Mission has in recent years focussed its attention upon establishing and strengthening the indigenous church in a special way. Where possible, local churches have been formed with a simple organization and at present sixty such churches exist. It has been very difficult to obtain government sanction for the construction of a church in a village, yet a large number of the congregations have been able to build a hall, which they use for worship as well as for school purposes.

The Annual Field Associations are now held on each of the eight fields; the attendance at the same has increased and the gatherings have become an important factor in church life. The annual Convention of all the Telugu M. B. churches has taken on large proportions and has come to assume more responsibility. It has framed and adopted a constitution, according to which it attempts to conduct its activities. The official name it has chosen is Andhra Mennonite Brethren Convention.

In 1946 a Mission and Church Council was instituted on which the Mission is represented with six members and the Telugu Church with eight. The purpose of this Council is to deal with all matters which concern the Mission and the Church in common.

The training of an indigenous ministry for the churches is receiving special attention. Besides the Bethany Bible School, the annual Bible-Week meetings, held on every station each fall, and the short term Bible Schools which have at times been conducted at some of the stations, have all been contributing factors toward establishing a better ministry in the church. There are at present not less than 250 men engaged as preachers, teachers, evangelists, and helpers in the service of the Telugu M. B. Church. Many of these men are at least partly supported by the contributions coming from the Church. Many of the women, who have some education and Bible training, commonly called Biblewomen, do excellent work as teachers or as personal workers among women in the villages.

The trend toward nationalism in India during recent years, and the great change of government to Dominion Status, which occurred in August, 1947, are of paramount significance for the

continuation of Christian Missions and for their future policy. The shifting of more responsibility from the Mission to the indigenous Church is an inevitable step. The position of the Hyderabad State in the new India is not yet fully settled, and the way this is solved will have a direct bearing upon the future of the Mission and of the Telugu Church.

The Mission as well as the Telugu M. B. Church are passing through a crisis and a time of testing. May the Lord, Who gave the Great Commission and Who keeps watch over His children, give a special measure of grace at this time! May it please Him to keep the doors open for further service! May He grant to the Telugu M. B. Church a mighty revival, wrought by the Holy Spirit, where believers come into a close communion with their Lord and where sinners turn to Jesus Christ!

CHAPTER XIV

THE M. B. MISSION AND ITS INDIGENOUS CHURCH IN CHINA 1911-1949

The Mennonite Brethren Church of North America has been interested in Christian Missions in China for more than fifty years. The earliest contacts which called the attention of the church to the work of missions in this land were the reports of missionaries who had labored in China. When the China Mennonite Mission began and members of the M. B. Church entered this field of service through that mission the interest was increased. With the beginning of an M. B. Mission in China in 1911 and its being taken over by the General M. B. Conference in 1919 the Church felt that it had a vital part in the cause of bringing the Gospel to the many millions of China.

The historical course of M. B. Missions in China and the resultant M. B. Church from Chinese converts, therefore, forms an essential part of the history of the M. B. Church and shall be treated in this chapter.

1. The China Mennonite Mission

In 1901 Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Bartel, members of the Krimmer M. B. Church, went as missionaries to China. After laboring under an independent mission for several years, they, in 1905, felt led of the Lord to begin a Mennonite Mission. Finding a large unoccupied field in the southwestern part of the Shantung Province and the northeastern part of the Honan Province of North China, they here started the Mission. In 1906 Mr. Bartel returned to America where he effected the organization of the China Mennonite Mission Society, the Board of Directors of which was composed of members from a number of Mennonite branches. Upon his return to China, after three months, seven new missionaries accompanied him.

The Lord prospered this Mission in a wonderful way, and it was destined to become the largest Mennonite mission in China. Several mission stations were built and the number of missionaries constantly increased. The large field with a population of 1,200,000 inhabitants was occupied and evangelized, many converts were

won, and a rapidly growing church ensued. Among the institutions of note established by the Mission were the large orphanage and the Bible School for the training of native Christian workers.

The American M. B. Church has been closely related to this Mission in several ways: several brethren from the M. B. Church have always been members on the Board of Directors of the Mission. Among the missionaries a fairly large number of M. B. church members have been active on the field, including Mr. and Mrs. P. D. Kiehn, Mr. and Mrs. P. P. Baltzer, Bena Bartel, Emma Bartel, Tena Kornelsen, and Paulina Foote. Among the members of the M. B. Church many have made liberal financial contributions for the support of the Mission and many have borne the work up in earnest prayer. The missionaries, when on furlough, visited the M. B. churches and reported of the work, and this established a bond between the Mission and the churches in the hearts of many.

During World War II the M. B. Conference was asked to take over the full responsibility for the continuation of the Mission, but it did not appear to be feasible to have this plan carried out. At present the Evangelical M. B. Church is chiefly sponsoring the supervision and continuation of the Mission. The recent occupation of North China by the Communist regime has made the continuation of the Mission very difficult and hazardous, and nearly all the missionaries have left the field.

The Mission of the K. M. B. Church at Chotzesan, Inner Mongolia, should receive mention. Mr. and Mrs. F. V. Wiebe, who went to China in 1921, opened this Mission two years later. For some time the M. B. missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dick, had the supervision of this station.

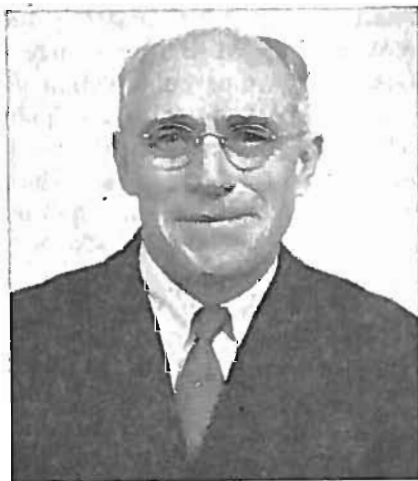
It should also be mentioned that since World War I, many Mennonite refugees have resided in several parts of China for some time. The largest number were at Harbin, Manchuria; another group gathered and remained for many years in extreme western China; others found their way to the city of Shanghai. Among these were a number of the Mennonite Brethren. Nearly all of these have, after years of suffering and waiting, found better homes in other countries, some in North America, the majority in South America.

2. The Mennonite Brethren Mission in South China

a. *The Beginning of the Mission.* The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church at its convention in 1909 discussed the matter of opening a mission in China, and as Mr. and

Mrs. F. J. Wiens had expressed their desire to go to China as missionaries and begin such a mission, the Conference authorized its Board of Foreign Missions to begin such a mission if possible. The Board, however, did not see its way clearly and, therefore, did not proceed with the opening of such a mission.

Mr. and Mrs. Wiens, thereupon, ventured forth in 1910 to begin an independent M. B. Mission in China, trusting that the Lord would supply the financial means through friends. On their way they stopped for nearly one year in Russia, where they held successful evangelistic meetings in M. B. churches and where they also won many supporters for the intended mission. From Russia they proceeded to China, arriving at the Baptist Mission in Swatow, South China, in the fall of 1911.



F. J. Wiens

In May, 1912, they proceeded two hundred miles inland into the Hakka area. Here they opened a mission among the Hakkas, a large tribe of the southern Chinese. They located at Shanghang (earlier spelling Shonghong), a fairly large city on the Han River, Fukien Province. While residing in rented quarters at the beginning, they procured a suitable site for the intended mission station. The erection of their dwelling house created much interest, and when it was completed and the Chinese were invited for "open house," they came in large numbers, over three thousand in four days.

Brother Wiens began aggressive evangelistic work in the city, holding street preaching services with the assistance of his language

teacher. Soon a building was purchased in the city and remodelled to make a suitable chapel for services. A small school for boys was begun in this building and a little later Mrs. Wiens began a school for women.

Several of the Chinese soon accepted Jesus Christ in faith for their salvation, and a little more than a year after their arrival on the field, the Wienses had the privilege of having the first baptismal service. Others, including several students of Confucius, came into a living faith and followed in baptism. A simple form of church organization could now be effected and the worship services, prayer meetings, and Sunday School were carried on regularly with a constant increase in attendance.

Besides the work in the city of Shanghang, Mr. Wiens also made extensive tours into the towns and villages of the field and as soon as possible established outstations at several key points. One of the paramount needs was that of native preachers and evangelists. Mr. Wiens, therefore, early began a Bible School with eight students, in order to train these men for Christian work. The Bible School continued to be an important factor in the work of the Mission for many years. Here the village evangelists and Biblewomen were trained and then sent out to serve their Lord among their own people. The school for children was continued and attendance increased from year to year. Work among the sick was also begun and carried on in so far as it was possible for the two missionaries to do.

During these early years there were frequent periods of unrest in southern China. Continual clan strife and civil warfare between the northern and southern forces often centered around Shanghang. Mr. Wiens, as a neutral person, was instrumental in mediating for peace several times, and on one occasion was asked to lead the remaining portion of the northern army to the coast.

b. *The Continuation of the Mission by the M. B. General Conference.* After the Mission had become established and Mr. and Mrs. Wiens faced challenging opportunities for expansion of the work and realized the need for more mission workers, they had a strong desire that the M. B. Conference would take over the Mission as one of its projects. They sent a long report of the work with a request for this to the Conference when it convened in 1915. The Conference at this time was not ready to take over full responsibility for the Mission, but allowed in its budget some financial support for it and decided to make the final decision at the following Conference.

In the summer of 1919 Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Pankratz, missionaries from India, stopped in China and visited the Mission while on their way home to America. They received a favorable impression of the work done in the Mission and recommended that the Conference take over the Mission. In the fall of that year the M. B. Conference convened and on this occasion accepted full responsibility for the Mission, made full provision for the continuation of the work in its budget, and accepted new missionaries for the field.

In the spring of 1920 Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dick, Miss Helena Heppner, and Miss Tena Kornelsen went forth to this field as new



J. S. Dick

missionaries. Mr. and Mrs. Dick soon took charge of the station work when the Wiens family went home on furlough, and later they opened a second mission station at Eng Teng, forty miles southeast of Shanghang. The two sisters were both engaged in the work at Shanghang, Miss Heppner taking charge of the medical work, and Miss Kornelsen of the girls' school.

Early in 1921 Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Wiens arrived on the field. They soon took over the charge of the large boys' school at Shanghang. Their ministry, however, was only brief. Nearly two years after their arrival Mr. Wiens became ill with influenza and died on

the field. Mrs. Wiens continued the supervision of the school for some time and then returned to America.

Other missionaries of the M. B. Conference were—Mary and Sophia Richert, who arrived in 1922 and took charge of the school and medical work at Eng Teng. Mary Richert died of smallpox after a short and blessed service. Miss Paulina Foote, who arrived in 1924, went out with the express purpose of teaching the missionaries' children. Miss Adelgunda Prieb, who arrived a year later, entered the medical work at Shanghang.

With God's blessing resting upon the Mission and with the entrance of all these young missionaries, the work continued to



B. F. Wiens

prosper for a period of seven years. In 1921 F. J. Wiens reported of an indigenous church on the field having 450 members, of eleven out-stations supplied with ministers, and of seventeen schools in which thirty teachers were employed. Statistical figures for later years are not available, but the reports indicate a constant growth of the Hakka M. B. Church, a steady increase of attendance in the station schools as well as in the village schools, and a remarkable expansion of the medical work. The missionaries looked forward to a wonderful expansion of the work and prayed for a rich harvest of souls to be gathered in.

c. *The Unrest in China and the Trials of the Mission.* This period of prosperity and this hope for expansion, however, continued only until 1927. The most serious hindrance for the Mission

was the continuous political unrest and the repeated revolutions and civil wars in the land. This not only interrupted the work but also endangered the lives of the missionaries. For a long time the missionaries continued in spite of dangers and hindrances. At last it became impossible to continue with the work any longer, and in 1927 all the missionaries were obliged to leave the field. When the last party was en route to the coast, traveling by river boat, they were overtaken by robbers and plundered of some of their belongings. They left for America with the hope that a return for resuming the work would soon be possible.

In 1929 the Dick family again returned to the field with hopes and plans for further service, though there was still much unrest in southern China. During the first six months they had to leave the station twice to seek a place of safety. When they returned to the Shanghang station the last time, they stayed only a day to pack the most essential things and then left for the coastal city, Swatow. A few months later the mission premises at Shanghang and at Eng Teng were demolished by the revolutionists.

During their stay in Swatow Brother Dick and other missionaries in the city began a union work among the Hakka refugees coming from the fields of several denominations, and organized a Christian church which soon became almost self-supporting. It was during this time that Mr. Dick made an extended trip to Borneo to investigate the possibilities of beginning a mission among the Hakkas who had immigrated to this island. Though he found here a promising field, a mission did not materialize.

In 1935 Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Wiens returned to South China once more with the object of resuming the work. Reaching the field they found the buildings of the mission stations demolished, the members of the church scattered, and the schools all closed. Mrs. Wiens died after a severe illness in 1935. Brother Wiens did not again build up a station or reopen schools. He continued to travel extensively as an evangelist and hold meetings over a wide area of southern China. Some time after the death of his first wife he was united in marriage with Miss Agnes Koop and the two continued in the work until 1940, when they returned to America.

d. *The M. B. Conference Resumes the Mission Work in South China.* Many in the M. B. Church in America regretted it very much that the Mission in China had thus come to a close. It was, therefore, determined by the Conference to make another attempt to send out missionaries and resume the work. Mr. and Mrs. Roland Wiens, children of the early missionaries, F. J. Wiens, dedi-

cated themselves for this field and were sent there in the fall of 1947. Upon their arrival in Shanghang they established their home within the city and as soon as possible began aggressive evangelism. The scattered members of the church were gathered and regular services were conducted with them. Evangelistic tours in the surrounding villages were undertaken and soon there were a number of converts requesting baptism. Mrs. Wiens also began to do some medical work in addition to her household duties. Since they found a great need for Christian workers and leaders for the indigenous church, the Wienses soon began a Bible School to train such workers.

The work has, however, been carried on under much difficulty during the past two years. Communication with the coast and the outside world became very difficult, and the procuring and exchanging of American money almost impossible. Recently the Communists have occupied the whole area. The continuation of the Mission now largely depends upon further developments and the attitude of the present government toward Christian Missions. The work is God's work and is in His hand. The situation calls for much prayer on the part of God's children at this time. The missionaries were refreshed and encouraged by a visit from Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Warkentin in the summer of 1949.

3. The Mennonite Brethren Mission in West China

Since the doors for continuing mission work in South China were closed for some time, the M. B. Conference came to consider the possibility and advisability of opening a mission in some part of China. The Lord wonderfully led to a field in West China, where a Mission could be opened.

In 1941 Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Bartel, founders of the China Mennonite Mission in Shantung and Honan provinces, left that field and traveled westward. When they came to the headquarters of the China Inland Mission and of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Chungking, they were informed that a field in the mountainous area about three hundred miles further north was still largely unoccupied, and that these missions would welcome the opening of a mission in that area. Brother Bartel had a strong urge to proceed into this area and begin the proclamation of the Gospel in this occupied territory.

In the summer of 1942 Mr. and Mrs. Bartel traveled northward from Chungking and stopped for some time at various places

to preach the Gospel to the Chinese. They entered into an area which forms the eastern part of Kansu Province and the western part of Shensi Province. In this mountainous territory, where travel was most difficult and also dangerous, they went on foot long stretches, exploring the field and preaching to many people. This part of China is particularly backward. Many are addicted to opium and to stealing; killing and kidnaping are common affairs.

Early in 1942 Miss Paulina Foote escaped from the territory occupied by the Japanese and after an eighty-three days' journey came to the Bartels in West China. She joined them in the work and continued there until March, 1946, when she proceeded to America for furlough, visiting the Shanghang field in South China en route. In April, 1946, Sister Bartel died on the field in West China, and Brother Bartel, after a short furlough to America in 1948, has again returned to this field. The M. B. Conference through its Foreign Mission Board, contacted Brother Bartel, to find out whether it would be possible for the Conference to take over a field of work in West China. After some correspondence and investigation the arrangements could be made. The field in the Kansu and Shensi provinces was taken over in collaboration with the Krimmer M. B. Church and with the understanding that the K. M. B. Church would occupy the southeast part of the field and the M. B. Church the north and northwest sections.

These arrangements were completed in the fall of 1945. In 1946 the M. B. Foreign Mission Board sent Mr. and Mrs. P. D. Kiehn and the sisters, Bena and Emma Bartel to this field. Upon arrival they established their headquarters at Shuang Shih Pu. Later the Bartel sisters located at Hueih sien, fifty miles farther west. In the early summer of 1947 Mr. and Mrs. P. P. Baltzer and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Baltzer went to this field and joined in the work of the Mission.

The Lord signally blessed the testimony of His messengers in this difficult field. A number of the Chinese accepted Jesus Christ in faith and were saved and baptized, and there is now the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ in this area. The organized M. B. Church on the field numbers about 150 members. Some of the Christian workers from the China Mennonite Mission Field in North China have come and joined the missionaries in the proclamation of the Gospel. Two of them, ordained ministers, have taken over the ministry in the Christian groups.

The work here has, however, had its special trials from the beginning to the present. With the onslaught of the communistic

movement and the unrest in this part of China, the missionaries found it necessary to leave the field for some time and go to Chengtu, a large city about two hundred miles southwest. Meanwhile Brother P. D. Kiehn became seriously ill, so Mr. and Mrs. Kiehn were obliged to leave the field late in 1948 and return to America.

Because of a change for the worse in the land and conditions deteriorating, the two Baltzer families found it necessary to leave for the coast and return to America in the summer of 1949. The two Bartel sisters had before that returned to their station, Huei-hsien, and had there found a very good response to the Gospel. As far as is known, they are at present still in this place. Meanwhile the Communists have overrun this part of China and, humanly speaking, the future of the Mission does not look promising. With God, however, all things are possible and He can again open the doors of Inland China for the Gospel. The Missions in China, the missionaries on the field and those who have left, and the indigenous Chinese Church, constitute a special challenge for prayer to God's children everywhere.

CHAPTER XV

THE M. B. MISSION AND ITS INDIGENOUS CHURCH IN THE BELGIAN CONGO, AFRICA 1912-1949

The American Mennonite Brethren Church became interested in Missions in Africa shortly after its organization as a Conference. The earliest occasions which brought the Church into contact with missions in this continent were those where German Baptist mis-



P. H. Wedel

sionaries, who had labored in the Cameroons, Africa, came to America for deputation work and visited M. B. Churches. Sympathetic interest was thus created and for a number of years the Conference sent contributions through the treasurer of the Mission Committee for the support of two native evangelists on this field.

The attention of the M. B. Church was especially focussed upon the Cameroons in 1895 and 1896 when the two families, P.

H. Wedel and Heinrich Enns went to this country as missionaries of the German Baptist Church. Many of the Brethren were sorely disappointed, for they had hoped that these promising workers would begin a mission of the M. B. Church. When within a short time Mrs. Wedel was obliged to return to America on account of ill health, and Mr. and Mrs. Enns died on the field, and Mr. Wedel died at sea on his homeward voyage, these events made a deep impression upon many. A determination was kindled in the M. B. Church to make the required sacrifices and begin its own mission.

The longing to bring the Gospel of Light to the people of the Dark Continent continued to linger in the hearts of some. A young man, J. C. Wall, of Munich, North Dakota, went as missionary to East Africa and after a short period of service, laid down his life for the cause of Christ. When Mr. and Mrs. Aaron A. Janzen went as missionaries to the Belgian Congo in 1912, they found a sympathetic response on the part of members in various M. B. churches.

Since then two independent M. B. Missions have been developed in the Belgian Congo, Africa, which were in 1943 received into the Conference as its African Mission. The historical course of these two missions, their amalgamation into one, and the rise of an indigenous M. B. Church from the Negro converts, form a chapter, which is an essential part of Mennonite Brethren History.

1. Beginning and Growth of the M. B. Mission in the Kwango Field, 1920-1943

In 1912 Mr. and Mrs. Aaron A. Janzen were accepted as missionary candidates by the Congo Interior Mission, an independent society which had been organized only the year before. They left for Africa in November of that year and reached their destination, the Belgian Congo, in January, 1913. Upon their arrival they were stationed at Kalamba, in the south-central part of the Congo, where they labored until early in 1920. Then they were assigned to do pioneer work among the Bapende tribe, where they opened a station at Nyanga, about fifty miles north of Kalamba. Here they worked only a short time. During these early years they experienced deep sorrow through the loss of their two children whom the Lord took unto Himself.

a. *Selection of the Kwango Field.* Brother and Sister Janzen often had a deep desire in their hearts to start an M. B. Mission in Africa and this longing matured into the strong conviction that they should undertake this. In November, 1920, they asked

their Mission Board to release them and grant them the permission to begin this work. Their request was granted, though reluctantly.

Having the assurance that this was of the Lord, Mr. Janzen made an extended tour of two hundred miles westward into the southwestern part of the Congo. Coming to the important commercial center, Kikwit, he formed the acquaintance of a doctor who informed him of the thickly populated region to the south called Kikandji and also brought him into contact with the Commissary of the District. This Commissary approved of the Janzens coming into that area and opening a mission station.

Mr. Janzen went to the town, Kikandji, to survey the advisability of selecting this field, and after he was decided that the Lord



A. A. Janzen

had this field for them, he remained there for some time to win the confidence of the inhabitants. Returning home to Nyanga, he and Mrs. Janzen began to prepare for proceeding to the new field. After several months they moved to Kikandji. Upon arrival they lived in a tent until they had built their house. They began to preach to the inhabitants of this field and as soon as possible they opened a school.

The Mission Field selected by Brother Janzen was south of Kikwit, and, as it was ultimately occupied by the Mission, it extends 150 miles from north to south and 150 miles from east to west, thus making an area of more than 20,000 square miles. The population of this area is estimated at approximately 300,000 and

the inhabitants constitute the tribes Bapende, Bapinde, Bambala, and Bambongo. The principal language of this area is Kikwango, but each tribe has a dialect which is kindred to this language.

b. *Beginning of the Kafumba Station.* Since the site occupied at Kikandji proved to be an unsuitable place for a mission station, the Janzens sought and found a more desirable location at Kafumba, "nest of elephants," six miles away and thirty-five miles due south of Kikwit. Here the missionaries erected a dwelling house and other required buildings. During the first few months the elephants troubled them much. They came at nights in herds and destroyed what had been planted or built during the daytime. In July, 1924, the house was completed and the Janzens were able to move to the place and to direct their attention to the bringing of the Gospel to the surrounding villages.

They were the only Protestant missionaries in this area and encountered strong opposition from the Jesuits, yet the Mission prospered. The school increased in attendance, and dormitories for boys and girls and chapels for school and for worship services were constructed. Long tours were made into the field and the Gospel was preached in many villages. Language study, caring for the sick, and translation work had to be done. Since the Mission received very limited funds from the home-land, means had to be devised of conducting the school and all the other work as economically as possible. A plantation was, therefore, established at the mission compound, where bananas, coffee, corn, sweet potatoes, beans, mandioca and various fruits were grown.

The Lord blessed the teaching and preaching of His Word and soon a number of the school boys were converted. To the great joy of the missionaries sixteen were baptized at the first baptismal service. A short time later thirty-seven were baptized upon their confession of faith. A church was, therefore, organized which grew rapidly. After some of the larger boys had received sufficient instruction and training in the school, they were placed in the villages as preacher-teachers.

c. *The Coming of More Missionaries.* In 1927 it became possible for the Janzens to return to America for furlough. When they again returned to the Congo in December of the following year, four young missionaries accompanied them. Of these, however, only Miss Martha Hiebert remained with them as co-worker. Early in January, 1932, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Bartch arrived as additional workers. They stayed at Kafumba only one year when they proceeded to the Dengese Province. In the summer of 1933

Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Kroeker joined the Mission and continued in the work for two years, when they went on furlough. After the Janzens had been alone on the station for one year, Miss Hiebert returned from her first furlough in 1936 and Miss Kathryn Willems came with her as a new worker.

With the coming of various workers and their assisting for short intervals, the work could be expanded to some extent, but the main assistance was rendered by the sisters Hiebert and Willems. The former took over the medical work and the latter the school. It, however, pleased the Lord to take Sister Janzen unto Himself in September, 1937, after a period of faithful service in Africa of nearly twenty-five years. The staff of workers was strengthened in September, 1938, with the coming of the sisters Anna Goertzen and Martha Manz. Miss Manz, an energetic worker, died in January, 1941. Miss Goertzen has continued in the service for her Master to the present. The Lord led so that in January, 1943, Mr. Janzen was united in marriage to Miss Martha Hiebert, and the two have together continued in the work at Kafumba.

2. Beginning of the M. B. Mission on the Dengese Field 1933-1943

When Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen, during their furlough in 1928, visited the M. B. churches in Canada, many were deeply impressed by the reports of the work done on the mission field in Africa. Among these was the young couple, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Bartsch of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. In October, 1930, they volunteered to go to the Congo as missionaries. To facilitate their going out and to support them on the field, the Africa Mission Association was organized among M. B. churches in Canada. The Bartsch family proceeded to Africa, arriving in the Congo in January, 1932.

After one year's stay at Kafumba, Mr. and Mrs. Bartsch felt led to go into the Dengese area, about four hundred fifty miles northeast of Kafumba to begin an M. B. Mission among the Basongo-mene tribe. They left for this field in January, 1933, accompanied by three single missionary sisters. Upon investigation of the field, they located at Bololo, north of the Sankuru River, where they established the mission station. After building a dwelling house and learning the language, the missionaries traveled in the field and proclaimed the gospel tidings of salvation in Christ to the people.

Besides Mr. and Mrs. Bartsch several other missionaries have labored on this field for a short time, including Mr. and Mrs. H.

Lenzman from Canada, and Mr. and Mrs. Karl Kramer, who had come from Germany. A school was opened on the station, and after the missionaries had begun to tour the field they were also able to establish a number of village schools. Medical service was also rendered by Sister Bartsch and other missionary sisters and much sickness and suffering was alleviated.

The Mission in its pioneer years was carried on under great difficulties and in the face of much opposition, which sometimes made it almost impossible for the missionaries to remain. The superstition of the people was very strong, the hostility of tribal chiefs at times very severe, and the Roman Catholic priests opposed and hindered where they could. A number of souls were, however, won for Christ and baptized, and a small local church could be established.

3. Acceptance of the Two Missions by the M. B. Conference 1943

Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen had a desire to work as missionaries under the M. B. Conference as early as 1919. At that time they wrote to the Conference and asked for acceptance, for they were at this time about to open an M. B. Mission and wished to begin this under the direction of the M. B. Conference. The Conference, however, did not find itself in a position to accept the responsibility for another mission and delayed action until a later time. The Mission was meanwhile opened in the Kwango field and received its chief financial support from the M. B. Churches, though the Conference had not accepted the Mission.

After the Mission in the Dengese field had continued for a number of years, the Board members of the Africa Mission Association began to find the continuation of the Mission difficult and came to the conclusion that it would be more advisable to have the M. B. General Conference take over the supervision and responsibility for it. In 1938 this Board, therefore, asked the M. B. Foreign Mission Board to collaborate with them and take steps to make the Mission at Bololo a Conference project.

When the M. B. General Conference convened in the fall of 1939 the matter of taking over these two Missions in Africa was discussed at length. The Conference favored in principle the taking over of a mission field in Africa and approved the plan by which this could be carried out. When the Conference convened in spring, 1943, it decided to accept the two Missions in Africa and

continue them under the direction of the Foreign Mission Board.

This important step was taken when World War II was raging, when it was almost impossible to send additional missionaries or to continue the work. The Bololo station was at the time without resident missionaries, for the Bartsch family had returned to Canada for furlough in 1942. So no immediate action could be taken for the continuation of the work in the Dengese field. At the Kafumba station the decision of the Conference was received with much gratitude and the missionaries worked hopefully for the expansion of the work. The M. B. Conference has since the acceptance of the two fields in Africa regarded the work as one Mission with one budget for the maintenance of the whole work, and the missionaries on the field have effected their organization accordingly.

4. Continuation of the Mission and Growth of the Indigenous Church. 1943-1949

The M. B. Mission in the Belgian Congo had the greatest expansion and made its most encouraging progress after 1943, after the M. B. Conference took over the responsibility for the Mission.

a. *Increase of the Missionary Staff.* Due to the war it was not possible to send out further missionaries immediately. As soon as the war closed reinforcements were sent as rapidly as possible. A large number of young people in the M. B. Churches dedicated themselves for foreign mission work and many of them felt constrained of the Lord to go to Africa. Susie Brucks was sent out in 1944. Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Kroeker, who had formerly assisted Brother Janzen a short time, were accepted as M. B. missionaries and sent to the field in September, 1945. During the year 1946 the following new missionaries arrived on the field: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Buschman, Mr. and Mrs. William Baerg, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Friesen, and Miss Anna Enns.

Shortly after the arrival of the first of these workers, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Janzen returned to America for a much needed furlough, and proceeded again to the field early in 1949. In 1947 the Mission was strengthened through the arrival of the following new workers: Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Ratzlaff, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Kliewer, and the sisters Mildred Wall, Margaret Dyck, and Elsie Gunther. In 1948 there were added to the missionary staff the new workers, Mary Toews, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Esau, and Erna Funk. The last workers for the Congo field were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brucks, who

proceeded in 1949 as far as Belgium, where they are pursuing a year of study. These workers together with the four earlier workers, Mr. and Mrs. Janzen, Miss Willems and Miss Goertzen give the Mission a staff of twenty-seven active missionaries. Never before in the history of Mennonite Brethren Missions has such a large number of mission workers been sent to a field in so short a time as has been sent to Africa from 1944 to 1949.

b. *Expansion of the Work on the Kwango Field.* With the coming of so many new workers a rapid expansion of the work was possible. Since Kafumba was the only station until recently, nearly all of them had to be housed here to begin with. A number of buildings were constructed on this spacious 120 acre mission compound. The M. B. Mission was placed on the list of Recognized Missions by the Belgian Government in 1945, which is a definite advantage to the Mission.

The work has in recent years greatly expanded on the Kafumba station and field. The large school has increased still more and usually has an enrollment of from 450 to 500 pupils and the teaching staff is composed of 25 instructors. The hospital and dispensary work has likewise grown remarkably and the sisters, trained for such a ministry and engaged in the same, are doing a valiant service. Special clinics are conducted on certain days and people come for treatment in large numbers. A Girls' Home, where the girls receive special training for the Christian home duties, has recently been begun. Since quite a number of orphans have been brought to the Mission, an Orphanage has also been established. Industrial work and manual training, including carpentry and printing, have been stressed and well developed.

The Bible School, begun by Brother Janzen in early years, has been continued to the present and has filled a commendable place in the Mission. This school is attended by young men and young women who have had some elementary education before entering. For a long time a three-year course of instruction in Bible and related subjects was taught. Recently the course has been extended to include four years of instruction. The students receive instruction and training for Christian work in the villages, as preaching, teaching, or other work. The enrollment in recent years has averaged fifty students.

The need of producing a literature for the young Christian community was realized by the missionaries from the beginning. Efforts in preparing and publishing such literature have, therefore, been carried as far as possible. Of basic importance in all literary

work done by Protestant missionaries has been the translation, printing, and distribution of the Bible. This has also been the case in the Belgian Congo. During the past few years the M. B. missionaries, in conjunction with several neighboring missions, have been engaged in translating the New Testament into the Kikwango language. Mrs. A. A. Janzen has represented the M. B. Mission on this Committee and has done an important part of the work. The manuscript has been completed and is now being printed by the American Bible Society, New York.

Other important literary work has been done. A booklet of sixty-six Old Testament stories have been written and printed in the vernacular. A hymn book is being published. Text books for the schools have been written and printed and a Kikwango Grammar and Vocabulary has been prepared to serve as a guide to the study of the language. A Printing Shop with a press, a paper cutter, a mimeograph and other requirements have been set up, and a number of school boys learn much for practical life and perform a useful service in this shop. A Book Store where books and other supplies are sold to the public has been established.

Besides the manifold phases of work on the station at Kafumba, the field-work has been expanded. The Gospel is being preached continually in the 300 villages of the field, and souls are led to Christ. Village schools for the children of Christians and for others have been established. In 1947 there were nearly one hundred such schools. The instruction in these schools is only elementary, but many of the boys and girls later come to the station school for further study. Many of these children are saved while attending these schools.

At present the following resident missionaries have charge of the work at the Kafumba station and in the field: the families Janzen, Buschman, Friesen, and Ratzlaff, and the single sisters Willems, Goertzen, Wall, Toews, and Funk.

Immediately upon the coming of the new missionaries, the opening of more stations was envisaged. A suitable location with a promising field was found at Matende, about fifty miles north-east of Kafumba, where the erection of buildings was begun in 1945 and the place was occupied as soon as possible. An elementary school was opened almost immediately and evangelistic efforts in the villages were begun. The two families Kroeker and Esau and the sisters Guenther and Dyck are the resident missionaries in charge of this station and field.

A third station has recently been opened at Kipungu, about sixty miles west of Kafumba and on the west side of the Kwenge River. This large field appears to be open for the Gospel. At present the J. B. Kliewers and Miss Enns are the pioneer missionaries, who reside and work at this station.

c. *Resumption of the Work on the Dengese Field.* The Bololo station of the Dengese Field has been without resident missionaries from the leaving of the Bartsch family in 1942 until 1946. Since the M. B. Conference had meanwhile taken over responsibility for all the M. B. mission work in the Congo and since workers were now available, it was decided that the work be resumed. The new missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Baerg and Miss Susie Brucks went there to take charge of this station and field.

Upon arrival and survey of the conditions they came to the conclusion that it would be more advisable to establish the mission station at Djongo Sanga, near the bank of the Sankuru River, rather than at Bololo, fifteen miles inland. The erection of a dwelling house was immediately undertaken and soon a school was begun on the station. The missionaries undertook some evangelistic tours in the district and established several outstations with village schools.

Since the mission had been unoccupied for four years and since the work had declined, a neighboring mission had entered the field and regarded a large part of it as its own. For some time the missionaries and the Foreign Mission Board were about decided to turn this field over to this mission and sell to them the property on the station. The missionaries had even vacated the station and returned to Kafumba. The transfer, however, could not be completed immediately, and meanwhile the native chief and his people earnestly requested that the A. M. B. Mission continue the work and that the missionaries return. The Baergs have, therefore, returned to Djongo Sanga and resumed the work. A baptismal service of new converts has recently been reported and the members have been organized into a church. Miss Brucks has left for furlough, with a stop in Belgium for further study.

d. *The Indigenous M. B. Church of the Belgian Congo.* The missionaries have from the beginning of the Mission regarded the founding and establishing of an indigenous church according to the teachings of the New Testament to be their goal. With this end in view, they not only evangelize the field and baptize those who confess faith in Jesus Christ, but also establish local churches with a simple organization. Schools are being conducted with

the purpose of training leaders for the church and of preparing the members for a more consistent and useful Christian life. An M. B. Church of converts from the African Negroes, numbering more than 2000 members, has come into being as a fruit of the efforts of the A. M. B. Mission.

The Christian community is scattered throughout many villages over the whole field. The stronger concentrations are, however, on the mission stations where the institutional work is located. By far the largest local church is the one congregating at Kafumba, where large meetings are held every Sunday, and Sunday School and Young People's Meetings are being conducted and where Christian songs re-echo on the Lord's Day. In Timothy Njimbo, an ordained minister, this church has an able and devoted leader. The blessedness of giving has been taught to the native Christians and many give with joy for the Lord's cause. Those at Kafumba recently contributed in half a year 10,000 francs in their offerings (about \$250). With this they pay the salary of their minister and twenty teachers. The joy of witnessing for their Lord is implanted, and many of those who have the advantages of instruction in mission schools go forth to bear witness for their Lord.

The Church is still young. The members coming out of the ignorance and superstition and filth of heathenism need constant nurture in the Word, sympathetic counsel in their problems, and wise guidance in their daily life.

The Church is still weak. Yet it is battling against the forces of heathendom, and against fetishism and witchcraft; it has to stand against the opposition of the Roman Church; it has to take a stand for Christ in the face of the temptations of modern industrialism and the sins that come in from the West.

The Church has many problems to solve. It is in need of instruction in matters pertaining to Christian conduct; it has intrinsic problems of church discipline to deal with; it stands in need of a wise and fully consecrated ministry out of its own midst.

This Church of Jesus Christ on the M. B. Mission Field in the Congo has a glorious challenge from her Lord. It has been enlightened in order to show forth the excellence of Him who called her from darkness into His marvelous light. I Peter 2:9.

CHAPTER XVI

THE M. B. CHURCH AND THE M. B. MISSIONS IN SOUTH AMERICA 1930-1949

South America is the last continent to which Mennonites have migrated and in which the Mennonite Brethren Church has become established. The history of the M. B. Church in this continent involves two aspects: There is the beginning and development of the church as a result of the immigrations of those with a traditional Mennonite background, and there is the mission effort among the aborigines and other South Americans. The history of the former is confined to Paraguay and Brazil; that of the latter to these two countries and Columbia.

1. Immigration and Settlement of Mennonites in South America

a. *Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay.* The first Mennonites to settle in South America were of the Old Colony Mennonites from Canada. These left that country because they were not satisfied with the requirements of the Canadian government with reference to compulsory education in English. They went to Paraguay, where the first group arrived in November, 1926. The area in which they intended to settle was the Gran Chaco, west of the Parana River. Upon arrival at Puerto Casado on the Paraguay River, they found that this territory was not yet surveyed and so they were not able to proceed into it until the spring of 1928. Meanwhile other groups had arrived, making a total of 1700 immigrants. The disappointments of these settlers were grave and their hardships severe. The land was not what they had expected and the climate was unhealthy for them, nearly one hundred fifty dying the first year. Some returned to Canada. The vast majority, however, remained and established a colony of eighteen villages, named Menno Colony.

When, with the approaching winter of 1929, ten thousand Mennonites were in a great plight before the gates of Moscow, and a large number of these were at last helped to proceed into Germany, about 1500 of them were in 1930 enabled to migrate to the Chaco, Paraguay. Here they established the colony, Fern-

heim, northwest of the Menno Colony. The Mennonite Central Committee rendered valuable assistance to them, both in transportation and in settling. In 1932, a transport brought 378 of the Mennonite exiles, who had gathered at Harbin, Manchuria. A small contingent of Mennonites from Poland came to Paraguay at the same time. This brought the total number of those who immigrated and settled in the Fernheim colony to about 2000. Here they established eighteen villages in a short time.

This colony, too, has suffered many hardships, that were well-nigh unbearable. The whole territory had not been inhabited before by white men until the Mennonites came. Roads and facilities for transportation were bad and the markets far away. The climate was trying to them and nearly one hundred died the first year. All had to begin in dire poverty and had to learn by experience what products could be grown and marketed with some profit. Finally, cotton was found to be the best crop to raise in order to have some cash income. The grasshopper pest has been very severe for a number of years and the growing crops have sometimes been destroyed completely. Several times the colony has suffered much through drought.

Some of the settlers in the Fernheim Colony became discouraged because of the continuation of hardships and the difficulties of making a living, and about one third of them left. Some went into the large cities to seek employment; a fairly large group went to eastern Paraguay, near Rosaria, where they established the Friesland Colony.

The Paraguayan Government permitted the Mennonites a limited self-government within their colonies. They, therefore, established a village and colony government very similar to that which the Mennonites formerly had in Russia. To promote education they established their own schools, the instruction being in the German language. A more advanced school, "Zentralschule," was established in the Fernheim Colony.

Three church groups were represented among the Mennonites coming from Europe after 1930: the General Mennonite Church, commonly called "Kirchliche Gemeinde," the Mennonite Brethren Church, and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, the latter being but small. In the administration of the colony and in the provision for education the three groups cooperate. For the regulation of church matters they have organized a "Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten." In earlier years the three church groups usually held their worship services together and each branch

of the Church convened separately only for observing the Lord's Supper and for Baptismal Service.

b. *Mennonite Settlement in Brazil.* Of the Mennonites who had managed to come into Germany via Moscow toward the close of 1929, nearly one thousand later migrated to southern Brazil. The German Government assisted, to some extent, those who wanted to go to Brazil, providing transportation on credit, and the German Red Cross supplied them with household utensils. The first group arrived in Brazil early in 1930 and settled in the southern state of St. Catharina, along the Alto Rio Krauel River, about one hundred fifty miles inland from the Atlantic coast. In 1934 several hundred Mennonite refugees from Harbin, Manchuria, were enabled to come to Brazil, and they joined this settlement.

Those settling in the Krauel valley did not establish themselves in villages, but each family located on its own farm-land. The whole settlement consisted of three districts—Witmarsum, Waldheim, and Gnadenstal. Those who arrived later were not able to procure land in the Krauel valley and, therefore, settled on the Plateau Stoltz, farther inland. A fairly large settlement was also made near the large city Curitiba, Parana state, farther north.

Like their brethren in Paraguay, these pioneers also endured a period of severe hardships in early years. They have, however, become well established economically. Some of their number have gone into the Brazilian cities and have either found remunerative employment or established a successful business of their own. During World War II difficulties arose, because of the use of the German language in schools and churches. Instruction in the Portuguese language was made compulsory in the schools, and in the churches the Mennonites resorted to the "Plattdeutsch," which was less objectionable to the authorities than the German. In recent years a number of the Mennonites have left Brazil and immigrated into Canada.

In Brazil the Mennonites had to comply with the established government regulations and were not able to form closed colonies. In the schools they are obliged to adjust themselves to the educational system of the land. It appears that it will be rather difficult for them to retain their Mennonite identity, and their traditional principles and customs. The three church groups: General Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, are represented. The "Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten," on which the three church bodies are represented, arranges and regulates matters which all have in common.

c. *Mennonite Migrations to South America Since 1947.* Of the more than ten thousand displaced Mennonites who were found in German, Holland, and Denmark after the close of the Second World War, over five thousand have since 1947 immigrated into South America. The vast majority of these have settled in Paraguay, where they have established the two additional colonies, Volendam and Neuland. Some have gone to Brazil and of the more recent groups some have located in Uruguay.

In the gathering of these refugees, getting for them the required permission to leave Europe, and arranging for their transportation and settlement in South America, the M. C. C. has, through its representatives, rendered highly valiant service. The



Nikolaus Siemens

Mennonites in North America have made enormous contributions in money, food supplies, clothing, and farm implements for their aid.

The problems relating to their settlement and their establishing a normal way of living are acute. All have come to South America in dire poverty. In many cases the families have been torn asunder and it is not known whether the other members of a family are living or not. A large percentage consists of widows and of women where the husband has been taken back to Russia or has disappeared and his fate is unknown. Since the young people have grown up under the way of Bolshevism and have later been contaminated by the influences of Naziism, it is in many cases difficult to direct them into a normal way of life. In addition to alleviating their physical needs and providing a proper education for the young

people, a still greater need is that of guiding them in their spiritual life and into the Christian ways of conduct.

2. Formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay and Brazil

The formation of an M. B. Church in South America has been a gradual process. In the course of several years congregations of the Brethren developed in the different colonies. In the Fernheim Colony are the local churches—Orloff M. B. Gemeinde, Lichtfeld M. B. Gemeinde, and Schoenwiese M. B. Gemeinde. In the Friesland Colony there is one M. B. congregation. Among the immigrants coming after 1947 and settling in the colonies Volen-



Gerhard Balzer

dam and Neuland were also many of the brethren and they are uniting themselves into M. B. congregations. It is estimated that the M. B. Church in Paraguay has about 1300 members.

M. B. congregations have been organized in Brazil; one at Waldheim in the Krauel area and the other at Curitiba. These two churches number 450 members.

The M. B. Churches in Paraguay and Brazil met together in 1948 and organized themselves into an M. B. Conference. The purpose of this organization is to promote a closer relationship, to solve the problems which they as churches have in common, and undertake such phases of Christian work as they can do unitedly. They also sought affiliation with the General Conference of the M.

B. Church of North America and applied for admission into the same. At the convention of the M. B. General Conference in 1948 the churches of Brazil were represented by G. H. Rosenfeld as delegate, and the churches in Paraguay by C. Voth. On this occasion the brethren in South America were admitted into the M. B. General Conference as a District Conference.

The difficulties and problems confronting the M. B. Church in Paraguay and Brazil are not few and are not easy to solve. The visits and ministries of a number of brethren from Canada and from the United States have been of great assistance to them. Brother B. B. Janz of Canada ministered in their midst for six months in 1948 and was to them a great help as a counsellor and in removing



Kornelius Voth

some of the hindrances and misunderstandings that prevailed in the churches. He assisted them also in effecting local church organizations as well as in establishing them as a Conference. The brethren Robert C. Seibel and C. N. Hiebert, from the United States, have been of special help to the churches. Other brethren have gone out in connection with the M. C. C. and have been a help to the churches. Among these are the visits of P. C. Hiebert and A. E. Janzen, and the ministry of Waldo Hiebert from the United States, and the services of C. C. Peters, C. A. DeFehr, and C. F. Klassen from Canada.

A Mennonite settlement began at Compomento, Arapey, Uruguay in the fall of 1948. Among those intending to establish their homes in the country were a number of members of the M. B.

Church. They took the first steps toward organizing themselves as a church on October 22, 1948. On December 2-4, 1949, the brethren C. C. Peters and R. C. Seibel were in the midst of this group and have been a help to the churches, and further steps were taken toward the organization of a church. The newly formed church decided to apply to the M. B. Conference of Paraguay and Brazil for admission and requests that ministers in their midst be ordained. Many of the immigrants were at that time still in immigration barracks and the establishing of the settlement as well as the organization of church-life was still in the making.

3. The M. B. Mission to the Indians in Paraguay

When the Mennonites settled in the Fernheim Colony, they found themselves surrounded by several Indian tribes, still in a savage state. Those nearest to them were the Lengua tribe, a nomadic and peaceable people. Contacts with them were soon made and some of the Indians came and worked for the Mennonites and even learned the "Plattdeutsch" language. Many of the more spiritually minded among the Mennonites soon realized that it was their duty to present the claims of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

a. *The "Light to the Indians" Mission.* In 1932 the three branches of Mennonites in Paraguay organized themselves as a Mission Society and elected a committee, the duty of which was to take steps in opening a mission to the Indians. The undertaking was, however, delayed because of the war between Bolivia and Paraguay, which was fought in the Chaco. In 1935 the Committee applied to the Government for permission to open and conduct such a mission among the Indians. In less than two months the permission was granted them.

The first missionaries to enter this work were Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Giesbrecht, who have been more or less occupied with the work from 1935 to the present. They erected a hut west of the Colony where they lived and sought to win the confidence of the Indians and to lead them to Christ. In 1936 they changed to a new location south of the Fernheim Colony. Others who have assisted them in early years are Mr. and Mrs. Abr. Ratzlaff and Maria Wiens.

In 1937 Bernhard P. Epp from Canada went to Paraguay and joined in the work of the Mission. His bride followed him in 1940, and the two were united in marriage and both worked among

the Indians until July, 1941, when they returned to Canada. That same year Mr. and Mrs. Martin Duerksen from the Colony entered the work and began a children's home. In autumn, 1945, this orphanage was entrusted to the charge of Katja Siemens.

The work of the Mission progressed rather slowly. However, the missionaries made a special effort and learned the language of the tribe and presented the Gospel to them in their own language. The Word did not return void. In February, 1946, the first seven converts from the Lenguas were baptized and a short time later another baptismal service followed.

b. *The Mission under the M. B. Conference.* The Fernheim Mission Society began to feel more and more the need for a stronger



Gerhard B. Giesbrecht

church body to take over the responsibility and maintenance of the Mission. Since the work was predominatingly done by the Brethren and since a large part of the financial support received from abroad came from the M. B. Church in North America, the Society asked the M. B. Conference to take over the Mission.

The M. B. Conference, when in convention in the fall of 1945, agreed to to this and within a year the arrangements for taking over the Mission were completed. According to the provisions made, the M. B. Conference sends missionaries to this field, directs the Mission through its Board, and makes financial contributions according to a budget. The M. B. churches in Paraguay contribute some of the workers, support the work financially in so far as they are able, and have a voice in the supervision of the work.

The work of the Mission has prospered since then and has been expanded and enlarged. Mr. and Mrs. B. P. Epp again went to the field in 1946, but were compelled to return to Canada in 1949, due to ill-health. Mr. and Mrs. Jacob H. Franz were sent out to the field in 1946 and are still engaged in the work. They feel a special call to bring the Gospel to the Chulupi tribe of Indians. The workers from the Fernheim Colony, Mr. and Mrs. Giesbrecht and Mrs. Katja Siemens-Klassen, are still active in the work. A large complex of land south of the Colony has been procured and efforts are being made to settle the Christians from the Lengua tribe here.



Gerhard H. Rosenfeld

4. The M. B. Mission in Brazil

The initial stages leading to the beginning of an M. B. Mission in Brazil were due to the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob D. Unruh of the United States. They went to Brazil in 1940 to work in the Mennonite settlements. After some time they became connected with the Salvation Army in Curitiba and assisted them in their evangelistic program and also took charge of an orphanage.

In 1944 the Unruh family returned to the United States and appealed to the Foreign Mission Board of the M. B. Conference to open a Mission in Brazil and expressed their willingness to be sent out for this purpose. When the Conference convened in the fall of 1945, it approved the opening of a Mission in Brazil and authorized the Board to proceed. The required preliminary steps

were taken and in June, 1946, the Unruhs were sent to Brazil as M. B. missionaries.

After their arrival at Curitiba, Brazil, they investigated the possibilities for mission work and searched for a suitable location where the mission might be established. A place, seven miles west of the city, comprising fifty acres of land, having two buildings, fruit trees, vineyards, and some timberland, was purchased. The Unruh family moved here early in 1947. A residence for the missionaries was built and immediately after that a building to house the intended orphanage was constructed.

The orphanage was completed and dedicated in December, 1947, and the mission work has since centered in this institution. Orphans and destitute children coming from among the Brazilians are received in this home and are brought under Christian influences. A school is conducted for those children of school-age. In October, 1948, Miss Linda Banman was sent to Brazil to take charge of this orphanage. In the late fall of 1948 the Unruh family was compelled to return to the United States, due to the ill-health of the brother. Miss Banman is at present the only missionary on the field. The M. B. churches in Brazil assist the Mission to some extent and have usually provided the personnel of manual workers for the farm and orphanage.

5. The M. B. Mission in Colombia

The last, and at the same time the nearest, foreign mission field occupied by the M. B. Conference is the one in Colombia, South America. At the M. B. General Conference in 1943 a recommendation by the Board for Foreign Missions to begin a mission in Colombia was accepted. The Board was at the same time authorized to take forward steps. The following year Mr. G. W. Peters visited this country and upon his return he reported of opportunities for taking over an open field in the northwestern part of the country.

In April, 1945, the Mission Board proceeded to send Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Wirsche as the first missionaries to Colombia and in December, Mr. David Wirsche. Since then other young missionaries have followed in rapid succession. Mr. and Mrs. John A. Dyck, Annie E. Dick, Lillian Schafer, Kathryn Lentzner, and Mary I. Schroeder in 1946; Lydia Golbeck, and Mr. and Mrs. Jacob A. Loewen in 1947; and Mr. and Mrs. Harry K. Bartel and Ruth Loewen in 1948.

The field in which these young missionaries are located, and in which they endeavor to garner in sheaves for their Master, includes the rugged tableland in the northern part of the Valle District and the San Juan Valley area in the southern part of the Choco District. It stretches from north to south about one hundred and fifty miles and from the shores of the Pacific Ocean eastward about one hundred miles. Since much of the territory is mountainous and since few roads have been built, travel is very difficult and many places can be reached only by a motor launch on the rivers.

The population, which is somewhat sparse, consists mainly of Spaniards or of a mixed race of Spaniards, Indians, and Negroes. There are, however, also pure Indians still living the manner of life their ancestors lived in remote times farther inland and in the more secluded parts. In the Choco there are also some pure Negroes. In religion the white and mixed people adhere at least nominally, to the Roman Catholic Church.

This Mission has since its beginning opened three stations. The first one occupied is at La Cumbre, Valle District, in the southern part of the field. It is easily reached by railroad from the sea-port, Buenaventura. When the M. B. Mission began, a station formerly occupied by another society was purchased. This provides living quarters for the missionaries as well as convenient accommodations for the work. Besides evangelistic meetings and other services, a school for children of missionaries and a school for nationals are being conducted, a dispensary has been opened and many patients come here for treatment. Since the station is located on a high elevation where it is cool, it serves as a retreat for the missionaries laboring in the valley, and they at times resort thither for change and rest.

The second station opened by the Mission is Istmina, in the northern part of the field and at the junction of the San Juan and San Pablo rivers. Here a large house was purchased in 1948 part of which is occupied by the missionaries and a part of which houses the dispensary. Regular meetings are conducted in the chapel, and Gospel street-preaching is done in the city and in surrounding towns and villages.

The third mission station begun is that at Noanama, fifty miles down the San Juan River from Istmina and to the south of it. Till now the missionaries occupied rented quarters, but at present a residence is being built on the procured station-site. In the coun-

try surrounding Noanama numerous Indians live, and the missionaries have begun to study their language and to preach the Gospel to them.

The Mission in Colombia is young and the field is a very difficult one. The results have so far not been conspicuous. At La Cumbre a number of persons have been converted and baptized. The precious seed of the Word is being sown throughout the field and some day it will bear its fruit. The Key to open this field, entrusted to the Mennonite Brethren, is with Him of Whom it is said, "He openeth and none shall shut." Rev. 3:8.



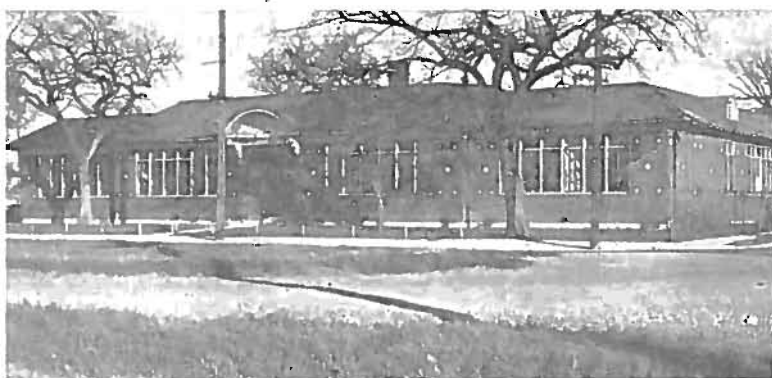
TABOR COLLEGE

Hillsboro, Kansas, U. S. A. Established in 1908.



PACIFIC BIBLE INSTITUTE

Fresno, California, U. S. A. Established in 1944.



MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Established in 1944.

PART FOUR

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Many Brethren have had an important part in the establishing and upbuilding of the Mennonite Brethren Church. The ministry they were enabled to do by God's grace should be remembered and appreciated by us. Part IV, therefore, presents short biographical sketches of leading Brethren—elders, ministers, deacons, evangelists, missionaries, and other outstanding contributors—who, having rendered a valuable service to the M. B. Church, have passed on to their heavenly reward.

The source material for these sketches was obtained mainly from the obituaries which appeared in the "Zionsbote" upon the departure of these Brethren. In a number of cases helpful information for these biographies was procured from other periodicals, from books and through letters from members of the respective families.

Valuable historical information about these worthy builders of the M. B. Church is herewith preserved and made available to the readers. The biographies are arranged alphabetically for convenient reference.

May they become a source of information, of encouragement, and of blessing to the readers! "Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith." Heb. 13:7.

ABRAHAMS, JOHANN—

Born at Landeskron, So. Russia, June 8, 1860. Father died when he was a little child. Immigrated into U. S. A. and settled at Henderson, Nebr., 1874. Married to Katharina Kroeker in 1882. Taught school in Nebraska for some time. Worked for a business firm in Bradshaw, Nebr., a number of years. Joined the M. B. Church in 1901. Was elected to the ministry in the Henderson, Neb. M. B. Church, and ordained in 1916. Served the church as leader for several years. Was secretary of the Home Mission Committee of the Cent. Dist. Conference. 1910-1924. Died at Henderson, Nebr. July 13, 1940.

ADRIAN, HEINRICH—

Born in Rudnerweide, Molotschna, So. Russia, March 22, 1851. Married Helena Loewen 1871. Established home in Crimea. Thirteen children born. Immigrated into U. S. A. 1874 and settled on a farm near Parker, So. Dakota. Converted and joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1877. Shortly after joining the church he was elected to the ministry. Ordained as elder in 1881. His early ministry was at Parker, S. Dakota and in new settlements in South and North Dakota. He moved to Buhler, Kansas, in 1904 where he was presiding elder of the Ebenezer and Buhler M. B. churches 1907 to 1924. He was an active M. B. Conference worker. Frequently served as itinerating minister, 1882-1900. Member of the Foreign Mission Board, 1907-1912. Died at Buhler, Kans. July 9, 1936.

ADRIAN PETER K.—

Born in Rudnerweide, Molotschna, So. Russia, April 1, 1853. Moved to Crimea shortly after birth. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1874 and located at Parker, S. Dak. Converted in 1877 and joined M. B. Church by baptism. Married to Carolina Duerksen in 1879. Four children born. Elected to the ministry 1889. Moved to Buhler, Kans., in 1913, where he died Aug. 29, 1923.

BARTEL, GERHARD—

Born in German Kasan, July 5, 1861. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1877 and settled near Hillsboro, Kansas. Married to Anna Funk in 1881. Children born, eleven. Converted and received into Hebron or Buhler's Church, near Buhler, Kans. Joined the M. B. Church in 1902. Elected to the ministry soon after. Moved to Boyd, Okla. in 1907 where he helped found the M. B. Church and served as its first minister. Died Feb. 13, 1915.

BARTEL, HEINRICH A.—

Born in Russian Poland, Jan. 2, 1872. Immigrated with parents into U. S. A. in 1875. Settled near Hillsboro, Kans. Converted at nineteen. Baptized and received into M. B. Church in 1894. Moved on a homestead north of Fairview, Okla., 1893. Married to Wilhelmine Eckert in 1897. Eight children born. Helped found the North Hoffnungstal M. B. Church. Elected deacon 1922 and ordained 1923. Died Jan. 28, 1944.

BARTEL, PETER H.—

Born in Don Settlement, Russia, May 26, 1867. Immigrated with parents into U. S. A. in 1880 and settled near Hillsboro, Kans. Converted and baptized 1887. Married to Anna Vogt. Twelve children born. Lived at Buhler, Kans., several years. Moved to Gotebo, Okla., 1902, and to Corn, Okla., 1910. Was an active Sunday School worker and served as minister at Gotebo and Corn. Died 1940.

BARTEL, ZECHARIAS C.—

Born near Hillsboro, Kans., March 31, 1886. Converted at fifteen and by baptism joined the K. M. B. Church of Gnadenau. Later joined the M. B. Church. Attended Tabor College and received B. A. in 1913. Taught commercial subjects in Tabor College several years. Married to Ida Rogalsky in 1915. Moved to Shafter, Calif., shortly after marriage. Elected to the ministry by the Shafter M. B. Church. Died at Shafter, Calif., Nov. 18, 1939.

BECKER, JACOB P.—

Born in Russian Poland, June 25, 1828. Parents soon after his birth moved to Molotschna, So. Russia. Married to Mrs. Hooze in 1852. Four children born. Second marriage to Margaretha Wiens in 1862. Seven children born. Converted about 1855, when the Brethren movement began. One of the eighteen brethren who founded the M. B. Church, Jan. 6, 1860. Elected to the ministry May 30, 1860, to be assistant to H. Huebert. Officiated at the first baptismal services of the M. B. Church.

Moved to the Kuban settlement in 1864. Immigrated into U. S. A., in 1875, and after a short stay in Indiana, settled in Minnesota. Moved to Kansas in 1888, and to Woods County, Okla. in 1894. He died April 12, 1908. Was the father to A. J. Becker, missionary to the Comanche Indians.

BERG, JOHANN—

Born in Fuerstenwerder, So. Russia, March 28, 1849. Converted at seventeen and in 1876 joined the M. B. Church by baptism, at Orloff, Sagradofka. Immigrated to U. S. A. soon after and settled at Burrton, Kans. Felt called to become a foreign missionary. Attended a medical school in New York City one year. Married to Anna Wedel in 1886. Seven children were born. Attended Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., several years. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist a number of years. Ordained to the Christian ministry at Marion, Kans., on Pentecost, 1894. Pastor of Baptist Church at Anaheim, Calif. for fourteen years. Established his home at Reedley, Calif., in 1909, and again joined the M. B. Church. There he was elected presiding minister of the M. B. Church, a position he held for nine years. He lived for short intervals at Orland, Lodi, and Wasco, Calif., but again returned to Reedley where he continued in the ministry. Active M. B. Conference worker in the Pacific District and in the General Conference. Served the Pacific Dist. Conference as moderator on several occasions. Member of the Board of Directors of Foreign Missions from 1915 to 1924. Died at Reedley, Calif., Nov. 7, 1941.

BERGTHOLD, DANIEL F.—

Born at Piatigorsk, Stavakol, So. Russia, Jan. 12, 1876. His parents were of Austrian-German descent. The family lived in the Kuban Settlement, Russian Caucasus, for some time. Immigrated to U. S. A., in 1877, and lived at Bingham Lake, Minn., Lehigh, Kans., and Kirk, Colo.—D. F. Bergthold spent most of his youth at Kirk, Colo., where he was converted and baptized in 1890. Attended McPherson College, McPherson, Kans., and Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. Married to Katharina Mandtler, June, 1903. One daughter was born. Traveling evangelist of the M. B. Conference, 1901 to 1904. Accepted by Conference as missionary candidate for India in 1901. Went as M. B. missionary to India in July, 1904. Wife died of smallpox six weeks after arrival. Second marriage to Anna Epp, Sept., 1905. Five children were born. Third marriage to Anna Suderman in Sept., 1915. One son was born.—Opened the M. B. Mission station, Nagar Kurnool, where he did his chief life-work. There he evangelized the field, established an indigenous church, a school, a hospital, taught in a Bible School, and for some time had charge of the publishing activities of the Mission. Final return to America in 1946. Died at Alhambra, Calif., Oct. 25, 1948.

BERGTHOLD, HEINRICH.—

Born in Janov, near Lemberg, Galicia, April 5, 1848. Moved with parents to Samara, Russia in 1862 and later to the Kuban in the Caucasus. There he married Alvina Starke, 1872. Thirteen children were

born. Immigrated to U. S. A., 1876. Lived at Bingham Lake, Minn. until 1884, where he joined the M. B. Church and was elected to the ministry, 1881. Moved to Lehigh, Kans., in 1884, to Kirk, Colo. 1892, and a few years later to Westfield where he experienced with others the Galveston flood disaster in Sept., 1900. After that he lived in Caddo County, Okla. He served the M. B. Church as minister in every locality where he lived. Died at Corn, Okla., March, 1933.

BESE, JOHANN.—

Born in So. Russia, July 24, 1851. Married to Justina Goossen in 1873. Fourteen children born. Immigrated into U. S. A. 1876, and settled at Parker, S. Dak. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church, 1882. Elected to the ministry in 1889, and ministered the Word many years. Moved to Enid, Okla., 1901 and later to Calif. and to Dubois, Idaho. Died at Orland, Calif., June 16, 1923.

BLOCK, JOHANN.—

Born in the village Cady, Russian Poland, May 29, 1863. Immigrated to U. S. A. near Hillsboro, Kans., where he lived the rest of his life. Converted during the revival of 1880 and baptized 1881, becoming one of the first members of the Hillsboro, M. B. Church. Married to Wilhelmina Nikkel in 1888. Seven children were born. Elected deacon and ordained in 1910. Served the M. B. Conference on the Publication Committee many years. Had an active part in the founding of Tabor College and in its support. Died at Hillsboro, Kans., Sept. 6, 1939.

BOESE, JOHANN H.—

Born in So. Russia, Oct. 7, 1844. Married to Elizabeth Warkentin. Five children were born. Second marriage to Elizabeth Fast. Ten children were born to them. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church, 1873. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1870, and settled in Marion County, Kans. Moved to Colorado in 1889, where he lived at Granada, Kirk, LaJunta, and Pueblo. At Pueblo, where he lived the longest time, he helped found the M. B. Church and became its first minister. Moved to California in 1910, where he lived and ministered at Bakersfield and Rosedale. He died in 1925.

BOESE, JOHANN J.—

Born in Russian Poland, May 28, 1850. Parents moved to Alexanderwohl, So. Russia, shortly after his birth. Was a pupil of Cornelius Wedel in school. Married to Maria Schmidt. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated into U. S. A., in 1876, and settled near Lehigh, Kans. Converted at twenty-one and joined the K. M. B. Church by baptism in 1877. He became an active church worker and in 1891 was elected deacon. Lived at Westfield, Texas, ten years. Moved to Corn, Okla., and joined the M. B. Church in 1912, where he served as deacon the rest of his life. Died Aug. 2, 1924.

BRANDT, ABRAM.—

Born in Osterwick, Chortiza, So. Russia, Oct. 16, 1864. Married Maria P. Klaassen in 1884. Converted and baptized in 1888. Called to

the ministry in 1892. Immigrated into Canada 1903, and settled north of Herbert, Sask. There he served the Lichtfeld M. B. Congregation as minister for ten years. Moved to Orland, Calif., 1913, where he died July 10, 1918.

BREHM, JACOB.—

Born in Norka, Russia, Oct. 18, 1845. Married to Anna Marie Kinsvater in 1864. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1874. Elected to the ministry at Brunnental shortly after baptism and was later ordained. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1874 and settled at Hastings, Nebr. There he helped found the M. B. Church and was its presiding minister many years. Died Aug. 16, 1920.

BURKHARD, CONRAD.—

Born in Walter, Russia, April 18, 1856. Married to Maria Benna in 1875. Eleven children were born to them. Converted in 1885. Immigrated into U. S. A. and settled at Culbertson, Nebr. There he joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Moved to Kirk, Colo., in 1893 and to Loveland, Colo., in 1906. Called to the ministry shortly after baptism and ordained in 1918. He served the M. B. Church of Loveland, Colo. as presiding minister. Died June 3, 1926.

BUHLER, ABRAHAM A.—

Born in Mariental, So. Russia, May 13, 1848. Married to Agatha Balzer in 1871. Second marriage to Mrs. Heinrich Balzer. Immigrated into U. S. A., 1875, and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Converted in 1888 and joined M. B. Church by baptism in 1889. Began to preach soon after joining the church and continued the rest of his life. Moved to Dalmeny, Sask., in 1901 and helped to found the M. B. Church at Dalmeny. Moved to Reedley, Calif., 1907, where he was the first minister of the Reedley M. B. Church. Served the Pacific Dist. Conference as chairman of the Home Mission Committee. Died Feb. 7, 1920.

BUHLER, JOHANN.—

Born in So. Russia April 28, 1872. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1875 and located near Mountain Lake, Minn. Converted in 1892 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Married to Sara Lepp in 1898. Fourteen children were born to them. Moved to Dalmeny, Sask., in 1901. There helped build up the M. B. Church. He was elected deacon and twelve years later to the ministry. Served as minister twenty eight years. Served the Can. M. B. Conference on its Home Mission Committee. Second marriage to Mrs. Katharina Harder in 1938. Died Feb. 2, 1947.

CLAASSEN, JOHANN.—

Born in Orlofffeld, So. Russia in 1820. Educated in local village school and in a "Central Schule." Served for John Cornis as overseer at his experimental farm. Converted during the revival in the Molotschna Colony in 1859-'60. One of the leaders among the eighteen Brethren who began the M. B. Church, Jan. 6, 1860. Most important service was the procuring of legal recognition for the M. B. Church from Rus-

sian government authorities in St. Petersburg and the procuring of a large tract of land for a distinctly M. B. settlement near the Kuban River, Caucasia. Settled in this colony in 1864. Died Dec. 27, 1876.

CLAASSEN, DIETRICH D.—

Born in Mariental, Molotschna, So. Russia, Jan. 10, 1839. Converted and baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1861. Married to Maria Huebert; moved to the Kuban in 1864. Two children were born to them. Second marriage to Elizabeth Wall in 1867. Ten children were born to them. Immigrated into U. S. A., in 1876. Settled on a farm southeast of Hillsboro, Kans. Became one of the founders of the Ebenfeld M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry and later ordained. Active M. B. Conference worker in early years. Died July 9, 1912.

CORNELSEN, ABRAHAM.—

Born in the Molotschna Colony Aug. 11, 1826. Received a fair education and entered the teaching profession. Married Aganetha Gaede. To them ten sons were born. Converted prior to 1860. Took a leading part in the formation of the M. B. Church. Wrote the declaration by which the M. B. Church established itself as an independent church body. Was driven from the Mennonite Colony shortly after. Settled in the Don area, where he was elected to the ministry and later ordained elder. Immigrated to U. S. A. 1879 and became elder of the Ebenfeld, Kansas, M. B. Church, where he died Sept. 4, 1884.

CORNELSEN, ABRAHAM A.—

Born in Molotschna, So. Russia, Jan. 7, 1850. Parents later moved to the Don River settlement. Converted and baptized at eighteen and joined the M. B. Church. Married Sarah Regier in 1870. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated into the U. S. A. in 1880 and settled in Marion Co., Kans. Elected to the ministry in early life he served as preacher in the churches Ebenfeld, Butler County, and Steinreich in Kans. In addition he did work as itinerating minister during the early years of the M. B. Conference. Moved to Hooker, Okla., in 1906. There he helped found the M. B. Church and was its first presiding minister. He died Jan. 6, 1929.

DEINES, JOHN—

Born in Norka, So. Russia, Jan. 5, 1870. Immigrated with parents to U. S. A. in 1876. Lived short time in Wisconsin and Ohio and then settled near Harvard, Clay County, Nebr. Converted at thirteen and joined the M. B. Church at Eldorado, Nebr., by baptism. Married Elizabeth Spahn in 1893. Eleven children were born to them. Elected to the ministry and ordained in 1929. Died Dec. 7, 1940.

DICK, JACOB C.—

Born in Sparrau, So. Russia, April 15, 1861. Immigrated with parents into U. S. A. in 1875 and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Married in 1883 and established a farm-home. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church in 1888. Rendered valuable service in the church

and community. Served the M. B. Gen. Conference as treasurer of the City Mission Committee many years. Served the Cent. Dist. Conference as treasurer of the Home Mission Committee many years. Moved to Mountain Lake, Minn. in 1915, where he died Oct. 11, 1925.

DICK, JOHANN K.—

Born in Sparrau, So. Russia, Oct. 26, 1870. Immigrated with parents into U. S. A. in 1875, and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Converted and baptized in 1890. Married to Helena Buhler in 1898. Seven children were born to them. Served the M. B. Church as deacon twenty-one years. Was active in many other phases of church work. Died Nov. 11, 1937.

DICK, JOHN S.—

Born near Bingham Lake, Minn., Jan 25, 1895. Grew up in Mountain Lake, Minn. Converted and joined the E. M. B. Church. Attended Tabor College, Moody Bible Institute, and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. Married to Tena Harder in 1918. Three children were born to them. Accepted by M. B. Conference as missionaries to China in 1919. Ordained as missionaries in 1920 and left for China. Served as missionary of the M. B. Mission on the stations of Shanghang and Eng Teng for fourteen years. Worked one year in Swatow and for a short time in Chotzesan, Inner Mongolia. Returned to America in 1935 and lived at Reedley, Calif., till 1941. Appointed missionary for the M. B. Mission to the Comanche Indians, Indianoma, Okla., in 1941. Served the Pacific Dist. Conference as member of the Home Mission Committee for several years. Died at Indianoma, Okla., March 19, 1942.

DUECK, HEINRICH—

Born in West Prussia, March 16, 1839. When two years old his parents moved to Russia, where he grew to manhood. Married Helena Suderman. Eight children were born to them. Converted in 1883 and later joined M. B. Church by baptism. Immigrated into U. S. A., in 1884. Settled at Hillsboro, Kans. Joined the M. B. Church and served as deacon many years. Died March 10, 1923.

DUERKSEN, DAVID—

Born in the Molotschna Colony, Russia in 1850. Naturally very gifted and received a good education. Taught school eighteen years. Converted in early life and joined the M. B. Church. Devoted himself to the ministry, 1885 to 1910. Traveled as evangelist and itinerating minister for many years and preached very effectively. Called to the Spat-Schoental M. B. Church in the Crimea in 1897, where he was ordained elder. He was an able expounder of the Scriptures. Those who knew him well have termed him a "Prince among Mennonite Preachers." He visited America upon special invitation of the M. B. Conference in 1895 and preached in many of the congregations. Died July 29, 1910.

DUERKSEN, JOHN F.—

Born in Alexandertal, Molotschna, So. Russia, July 25, 1863. Educated in the local village school and in the Gnadenfeld "Central Schule." After that he attended a pedagogical training school in Neu Halbstadt. Converted at fifteen and joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1879. Felt the call for definite service for the Lord and dedicated himself for it at the age of twenty-one. After completing his education he taught school in Russia three years. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1887 and located in Kansas. Taught school near Lehigh, Kans., from 1887 to 1890, and in a Mennonite "Vereinschule" near Buhler, Kansas, from 1890 to 1899. Served as principal of the German Department School of the M. B. Church at McPherson, Kansas, 1899 to 1905. Moved to Corn, Okla., in 1905 where he taught in the Bible Academy of the M. B. Church eleven years. Duerksen was an active minister and was assistant leader of the Corn M. B. Church sixteen years. Ordained in 1919. Served repeatedly on the secretarial staff of the M. B. General Conference and was general secretary of the Conference from 1919 to 1921. Edited the M. B. Sunday School quarterly many years. Married Katharina Warkentin Jan. 9, 1890. Seven children were born to them. Second marriage to Mrs. Gertrude Warkentin, Sept. 24, 1924. Died at Corn, Okla., May 1, 1932.

DYCK, DAVID—

Born in Chortiza, So. Russia, Jan. 25, 1846. Had limited educational opportunities but acquired a wide range of knowledge by continued study. Married to Helena Rempel in 1867. Fifteen children were born to them. Converted in 1873 and baptized and joined the M. B. Church. Immediately felt a call to Christian service and worked as a colporteur. Immigrated to U. S. A., in 1876 and located in Marion County, Kansas. Moved to Woodson County in 1877, where he lived seven years and ministered to the M. B. Church. Attended Rochester Theological Seminary a short time. Took charge of the M. B. Church at Lehigh, Kans., in 1884. Ordained elder in 1890. Moved to Kirk, Colo., in 1892, where he served as elder of the M. B. Church. Served as traveling evangelist in the M. B. Conference many years. Moved to Winkler, Manitoba, in 1895 and took charge of the M. B. Church there in 1906. Later he moved into the town Waldheim and ministered to the Waldheim M. B. Church. Traveled extensively and also preached to the Russians. Continued in the ministry fifty three years. Served the M. B. Gen. Conference on the Foreign Mission Board for many years, and the Canadian Dist. Conference as moderator on thirteen occasions. Died at Waldheim, Sask., Jan. 6, 1933.

DYCK, JOHANN B.—

Born at Heuboden, So. Russia, Sept. 30, 1870. Parents immigrated into Canada shortly after his birth. Converted in youth and by baptism joined the M. B. Church at Winkler, Man. Married to Helena Kroeker in 1895. They had no children but adopted and reared four children. Active in church and served as Sunday School superintendent twenty five years. Elected deacon and in 1936 ordained. Took active part in establishing the public school, the Bible school, and the hospital in Winkler. Died Nov. 15, 1937.

DYCK, PETER K.—

Born in Kleefeld, So. Russia. Converted in youth and joined M. B. Church by baptism. Consecrated himself for Christian service and was a living witness for his Lord while in the Forestry Department in Russia. Married to Katharina Willms. Nine children were born to them. Immigrated into Canada in 1926, and after living at Winkler, Man., a short time moved to Boisevain, Man., where he helped in organizing the M. B. Church. Elected deacon and later ordained. Died Jan. 17, 1933.

DYCK, WILHELM—

Born in Rosental, Chortiza, So. Russia, Feb. 4, 1854. Lost both parents when a baby and was adopted by Gerhard Krahn. An exceedingly able child. Educated in the local school and the Chortiza Central Schule. Married to Maria Riedeger, 1877. Eleven children born to them. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church shortly after marriage. Was "Oberschulze" in the Gebietsamt" of the Chortiza Colony for twenty years. Attempted to emigrate to America in 1890 but failed. Entered the Christian ministry and was ordained in 1892. Ministered to the M. B. Church, Nikolaipol. Was a very active evangelist and traveled extensively. Made an extended evangelistic tour in Turkestan. Second marriage to Emilie Petker. Seven children born to them. Entered the milling industry and had a flour mill in Petrofka. Moved to Millerowo, in the Don area, where he continued in the milling industry but devoted himself mostly to the church. Was instrumental in establishing a large M. B. Church in Millerowo. Ordained elder in 1914. Made an extended visit to America in 1907 and preached in many M. B. Churches. Immigrated to Canada in 1924. Lived at Gnadental, Man., until 1930, and at Niverville, Man., since then. Died March 2, 1936.

EDIGER, CORNELIUS J.—

Born in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, So. Russia, Aug. 23, 1852. Immigrated to U. S. A. 1876, and settled on a farm south of Henderson, Nebr. Converted and joined M. B. Church by baptism in 1886. Married Elizabeth Fast in 1875. Five children were born to them. Second marriage with Aganetha Kroeker. Nine children born to them. Elected and ordained deacon of the Henderson M. B. Church and served twenty-eight years. Died Jan. 18, 1936.

EDIGER, DAVID D.—

Born in Elizabethtal, So. Russia, March 25, 1850. Married to Helena Thiessen, 1872. Eighteen children were born to them. Immigrated to the U. S. A., about 1875, and settled in the southern part of McPherson County, Kans. Converted and joined M. B. Church in 1885. He served the M. B. Conference as treasurer of the Foreign Mission Board from 1902 to 1911. Died in September, 1911.

EDIGER, FRANZ—

Born in Gnaäenfeld, So. Russia, April 9, 1838. Received education in local school. Converted in youth and in 1862 married Aganetha Wiebe. Immigrated to America, 1877 and settled on a farm in Reno County,

Kans. Joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1879, and with the organization of the Ebenezer Church became one of its first ministers. Ordained in 1881. Moved to Buhler, Kans. in 1892. Lived a short time in Gotebo, Okla. Lived in Hillsboro, Kans., during his closing years. Second marriage to Mrs. Jacobina Harms. Died Dec. 10, 1920.

EHRLICH, JACOB—

Born in Russia, Jan. 1, 1847. Married Anna Ehrlich, 1866. Fourteen children born. Converted at twenty two and baptized four years later. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1876 with a group of Mennonite Brethren from the Volga River in Russia and settled near Marion, Kans. Organized them into an M. B. congregation and was their leader and minister. Ordained to the ministry. Took active part in M. B. Conference work. Joined the Baptist Church together with his congregation in 1895. Died at Marion, Kans., in 1905.

ENGEL, FERDINAND—

Born in West Prussia, Germany, April 8, 1848. Family moved to Russia 1855 and settled near the Don River. Married to Dora Litke in 1871. Eleven children were born to them. Immigrated into U. S. A. 1878 and settled near Ebenfeld M. B. Church in Kansas. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1876. Limited education but gained a remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures. Elected to the ministry in which he served the Steinreich M. B. Church in Kansas and the Corn M. B. Church in Oklahoma. Died April 4, 1928.

ELIAS, J. M.—

Born in Kronstal, Chortiza, Russia, Jan. 10, 1874. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church in 1892. Married to Maria Braun in 1896. Nine children born to them. Immigrated into Canada in 1901 and settled on a farm near Winkler, Man. Active in local church, in Sunday School, and in young people's work. Elected deacon and ordained in 1919. Assistant leader of the Winkler M. B. Church for some time. Assistant treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions for Canada for several years. Died April 7, 1941.

ENNS, JOHANN—

Born in Muensterburg, Molotschna, So. Russia, April 16, 1854. Educated, converted, baptized and joined M. B. Church in youth. Married to Agatha Hooe in 1877. Eleven children were born to them. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1878 and settled at Hampton, Nebr. Moved to Munich, N. Dakota. where he was elected to the ministry and later ordained. He led the M. B. Church at Munich until 1912 when he moved to Dallas, Oregon. Second marriage to Mrs. Gerhard Regier in 1918. Died at Dallas, Oregon, Aug. 10, 1926.

ENNS, JOHN M.—

Born at Henderson, Nebr., Feb. 12, 1882. Converted and joined M. B. Church by baptism in 1895. Moved to Munich, N. Dak. in 1897. Married to Katherine Buller in 1907. Five children were born to them.

Moved to Chinook, Mont., where he was elected to the ministry in 1914 and ordained 1915. Moved to Livingstone, Calif., 1921, where he helped organize an M. B. Church and served as minister. Later he lived for short periods at Dallas, Ore., Coldwater, Texas, and Winton, Calif. Died in a car accident, June 7, 1939.

EPP, ABRAHAM PETER—

Born at Ewanecke, So. Russia, Nov. 19, 1871. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1876 and settled on a farm near Hillsboro, Kansas. Converted and joined M. B. Church by baptism in 1891. Attended school at McPherson, Kans., for one year. Filed a homestead in the Cherokee Strip, near Fairview, Okla., in 1839 and settled there. Married to Carolina Bekker in 1894. Active in the local church of South Hoffnungsfeld where he served as Sunday School superintendent and deacon many years. called to the ministry in 1925 and served as leader of the church for some time. Treasurer of the Home Mission Committee of the M. B. Southern District Conference, 1924-1939. Died at Fairview, Okla., Oct. 8, 1941.

EWERT, PETER H.—

Born in Sparrau, So. Russia, April 15, 1869. Came with parents to America and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Converted and joined M. B. Church by baptism in youth. Married to Agatha Buhler in 1895. Seven children were born to them. Elected to the ministry and served thirteen years. Died March 19, 1912.

FAST, DANIEL—

Born in Halbstadt, Taurien Province, Russia, Feb. 18, 1826. Received education in local village school and in a more advanced "Vereinschule." Began to teach at nineteen and taught school thirty years. Married to Barbara Dick in 1847. Converted in 1864 and when joining M. B. Church, he was dismissed from the teaching profession. Went to the Kuban settlement and continued to teach there. Elected to the ministry in 1870 and ordained shortly after. Elected leader and elder of the Kuban M. B. Church in 1877 and ordained. Served as elder until 1901 when he retired. Died Oct.. 12, 1911.

FAST, HENRY G.—

Born in Ladokopp, So. Russia, Sept. 26, 1866. Lived in Gnadenheim later where he was educated. Immigrated with parents to U. S. A. and settled at Henderson, Nebr. Converted in 1880 and baptized the following year. Married to Maria Janzen. Ten children were born to them. Moved to Oklahoma in 1893 and settled on a farm south of Fairview. Helped establish the South Hoffnungsfeld M. B. Church. Elected deacon, 1897 and ordained in 1905. Died Aug. 10, 1934.

FAST, PETER—

Born at Schardau, So. Russia, Aug. 14, 1862. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1874 and settled near Marion, S. Dakota. Married to Katharina Born in 1884. Converted in 1889 and joined the M. B. Church at Silver Lake, S. Dak., the following year. Elected and ordained deacon in 1909.

Elected minister and ordained in the ministry in 1917. Led the M. B. Church at Silver Lake until 1924. Died at Mountain Lake, Minn., Jan. 10, 1930.

FOTH, JOHANN—

Born in West Prussia, Aug. 20, 1844. Parents moved to the Don River settlement in Russia when he was a child. Converted and baptized there and joined the M. B. Church in 1872. Elected to the ministry shortly after baptism and served as minister of the M. B. Church in the Don settlement seven years. Married Carolina Janzen, Jan. 6, 1871. Thirteen children were born to them. He immigrated to U. S. A. in 1883 and settled on a farm near Ebenfeld, south of Hillsboro, Kans. Elected leader and elder of the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1884 and ordained in 1885. Led the church until 1916 when he retired. Elder Foth was very active in the M. B. Conference and did much itineration for many years. Served on the Board of Directors for Foreign Missions a long time. Served on the Publication Committee of the M. B. Gen. Conference for many years. First moderator of the Southern Dist. Conference of the M. B. Church and served a number of years. Died at Ebenfeld, near Hillsboro, Kans., Dec. 11, 1932.

FOTH, JOHN S.—

Born in Rueckenau, So. Russia, May 15, 1858. Immigrated to America in 1876 and located at Bingham Lake, Minn. Went to Kansas in 1883 and settled on a farm southwest of Hillsboro. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church at Goessel, Kans. Married Elizabeth Schmidt in 1891. Two children were born to them. Second marriage to Helena Lohrenz in 1899. Seven children were born to them. Active in church work all his life. Elected minister 1904 and ordained in 1907. Presiding minister of the Goessel M. B. Church, 1907-1920. Chairman of the Home Mission Committee of the Southern Dist. Conference, 1910-1920. Strong supporter of Tabor College and served on its Board of Directors, many years. Helped in the establishing of the Mennonite Hospital, Bethesda, at Goessel, Kans., and served on its Board of Directors. Died Dec. 30, 1920.

FRANZ, JOHN J.—

Born on a farm south of McPherson, Kans., April 6, 1880. Converted in early life and by baptism joined the Ebenezer M. B. Church. Married Elizabeth Ediger in 1909. Six children were born to them. For higher education he attended McPherson College, Moody Bible Institute, Rochester Theological Seminary, Wheaton College, and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he graduated with the B.D. degree. Gifted in music, he served Tabor College as vocal music teacher, 1914-1916. Entered the field of evangelism and traveled among M. B. churches a number of years. Served the Corn, Okla., Bible Academy as Bible and Music teacher, 1937-'38. Located in Wichita, Kansas, in 1941 where he was engaged as minister in Baptist churches during his last years. Died at Wichita, Kans. Jan. 1, 1947.

FRIESEN, ABRAHAM—

Born in Nieder Chortiza, Russia, May 15, 1859. Grew up in the village Einlage where he received a good education. Became assistant and "right hand" in his father's large flour mill, machine factory and farm. Married Maria Martens. Was converted in early life. At twenty four he and his wife strongly felt the Lord's call to foreign missions and consecrated themselves for the same. Attended the Baptist Theological Seminary at Hamburg-Horn, Germany, 1885-1889. Induced the leading brethren of the M. B. Church to organize and undertake a foreign Mission in India in affiliation with the American Baptist Missionary Union. Went to India, Oct. 2, 1889, and arrived in Secunderabad, Hyderabad State in December. Began an M. B. Mission Station at Nalgonda, south-east of Hyderabad, where he located Oct. 25, 1890. He continued in the Mission until 1910 when he retired. Later he made another visit to India. He died in South Russia during the trying years following the first World War, about 1919.

FRIESEN, BERNHARD J.—

Born at Petersburg, Nebr., March 10, 1880. Spent childhood in Mountain Lake, Minn. Was converted in early life and by baptism joined the M. B. Church. After completing his education he began to teach at seventeen, and taught in Minnesota and Kansas. Later he attended McPherson College and Rochester Theological Seminary. Married Bertha Steinberg in 1911. The Pacific Dist. Conference called him to Bakersfield, Calif., in 1913, where he was stationed as city missionary and served as missionary of the local M. B. Church for twenty years. He served the Pacific Dist. Conference in its Home Missions Committee many years and also in other positions. For six years he worked under appointment of the American Sunday School Association. Later he established and conducted a private home for the aged in Portland, Ore. He died in April, 1949.

FREUCHTING, FRIEDRICH—

Born in the Don River settlement, Russia, Jan. 3, 1866. Immigrated with parents to America in 1883 and located in Marion County, Kans. Converted in early life and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church. Married Emilie Wohlgemuth in 1888 and they established their home near Lehigh, Kans. Five children were born to them. Moved to Oklahoma in 1893 and settled at Hitchcock. A short time later moved to Isabella, where he joined the South Hoffnungstal M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry soon after settling in Oklahoma and later ordained. Died Nov. 27, 1932.

FUNK, BENJAMIN—

Born in Novishadli, Russian Poland, April 13, 1863. Came with parents to America in 1876 and settled north of Hillsboro, Kans. Married Maria Bartel in 1882. Eleven children were born to them. Converted in 1891 and by baptism joined the K. M. B. Church at Gnadenau. Transferred his membership to the M. B. Church at Hillsboro in 1903. Elected deacon 1908 and ordained 1910. Died Feb. 18, 1920.

GEIS, JOHN—

Born in Russia, May 5, 1863. Immigrated with parents to America in 1876 and settled north of Hillsboro, Kans. Converted at fifteen and baptized. Lived for some time at Durham, Kans., at Bison, Kans., and at Loyal, Kans. He settled near Gotebo, Okla., in 1903, and in 1916 joined the M. B. Church. He at that time became the minister and leader of the reorganized M. B. congregation at Gotebo and served it twenty years. Married in 1883. Geis had a family of eleven children. Died at Gotebo, Okla., Dec. 30, 1941.

GOERTZ, SIEBERT—

Born in Runderweide, So. Russia, Aug. 3, 1863. When he was six his parents moved to Templehof and seven years later to the Kuban settlement. Went with his parents to Asiatic Turkestan and began a new settlement. There his parents and two brothers died. Converted at eighteen and joined the M. B. Church in Turkestan in 1883. Married Helena Dalke in 1885. To them eleven children were born. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1893. Lived a short time at Hillsboro, Kans., then at Goessel Kans., and in 1897 located in Buhler, Kans. He was a blacksmith by vocation. A very useful worker in the M. B. Church at Buhler. Elected deacon and later ordained and served the church in this office nearly forty years. Died May 10, 1939. His son Peter S. Goertz served as missionary to China, later as professor in Tabor College and after that as professor and dean of Bethel College.

GRUNAU, CORNELIUS—

Born in Burwalde, So. Russia, Dec. 5, 1852. Married Katharina Neufeld in 1873. Nine children were born to them. Converted in 1882 and by baptism joined the M. B. Church. Immigrated to America in 1892 and lived a short time at Ebenfeld, near Hillsboro, Kans. Moved to Oklahoma and settled in the Cooper community, near Okeene. There he helped organize an M. B. Church and was elected to the ministry. Later he moved to Isabella, Okla., where he joined the South Hoffnungs-feld M. B. Church, where he served as minister and was ordained in 1905. Moved to North Enid in 1915 where he lived the remainder of his life and assisted in the ministry. Second marriage to Mrs. Maria Regier Martens in 1918. Died Dec. 1, 1938.

GUENTHER, JOHANN—

Born near Danzig, Germany, March 2, 1861. Parents moved to Russia when he was eight. Married Regina Trinke. Ten children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1888 and located at Mountain Lake, Minn. Converted and baptized in 1889 and joined the M. B. Church. Homesteaded in the new settlement at Munich, N. Dak. in 1898. Helped organize the M. B. Church at Munich and was elected minister in 1901 and ordained in 1902. Was leader of the church, 1912-1923. Died Oct. 6, 1944.

HARDER, JOHANN—

Born in Blumenstein, Molotschna, So. Russia, Aug. 20, 1836. Converted in early life. Entered the teaching profession and taught in

Russia seven years. Married Elizabeth Fast in 1858. Settled in the Crimea 1865 where he joined the K. M. B. Church by baptism in 1871. Soon after baptism he was elected to the ministry and later ordained. Immigrated to America where he settled at Gnadenau, south of Hillsboro, Kans. There he taught school and assisted elder Jac. A. Wiebe in the ministry of the Gnadenau K. M. B. Church. His wife died in 1898. In 1900 he visited Russia, where he married Mrs. Renetta Schulz, and upon return to America, he joined the M. B. Church at Ebenfeld, near Hillsboro, Kans. There he served as minister. With declining age he retired and lived in Hillsboro, Kans., where he died Feb. 23, 1930.

HARDER, JOHANN A.—

Born in Hierschau, So. Russia, Jan. 5, 1865. Grew up in village Alexanderwohl. Converted and joined the Mennonite Church where he was elected to the ministry in 1901. Received immersion baptism and joined the M. B. Church in 1910. Married Tena Klassen in 1890. Seven children were born to them. Second marriage to Susie Koop. Harder moved to the Crimea in 1897 and immigrated to America in 1909. Established his home at Lehigh, Kans., where he joined the M. B. Church and was elected to the ministry and ordained in 1913. Moved to Borden, Sask., Canada, in 1913, where he served the Borden M. B. Church as minister and leader. Died May 19, 1935.

HARMS, DAVID—

Born in Grossweide, So. Russia, Feb. 9, 1861. Came with his parents to America in 1785 and settled near Lehigh, Kans. Converted in 1880 and baptized the following year. Married Eva Unruh in 1881. Fourteen children were born to them. Settled as pioneer at Medford, Okla., in 1894. Took leading part in establishing the M. B. Church of Medford and was elected deacon, and ordained in 1905. Harms moved to Bruderfeld, Sask. Canada in 1909. There he joined the local M. B. Church and in 1910 he was elected chairman of the Home Mission Committee and he served on this committee until 1922. Spent his closing years in Medicine Hat, Alberta, where he died Sept. 10, 1931.

HARMS, ISAAC I.—

Born in Grossweide, So. Russia, Feb. 24, 1863. Parents immigrated to America in 1875 and settled in the Ebenfeld community, near Hillsboro, Kans. Converted and joined M. B. Church by baptism in 1871. Married Maria Delesky in 1883. Nine children were born to them. Moved to Corn, Okla., in 1894. Elected minister of the Corn M. B. Church and ordained in 1896. Elected and ordained elder in 1900. Died in his home at Corn, Okla., Feb. 11, 1903.

HARMS, JOHANN—

Born in Grossweide, Molotschna, So. Russia, Dec. 18, 1856. Educated in local village school and in a "Central Schule." Began to teach at eighteen. Immigrated into U. S. A. in 1875 and settled in the Johannestal community, north of Hillsboro, Kans. Married Jacobena Franz in 1877. Eight children were born to them. Converted in a revival in

1880 and baptized the following spring. With this baptismal service the Hillsboro M. B. Church had its beginning. Elected minister, became leader of the church and was ordained in 1896. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist many years and as member of the Publication Committee. Worked two years in a Sunday School Mission in Minnesota. Died Dec. 2, 1910.

HARMS, JOHANN F.—

Born in Kleefeld, Molotschna, So. Russia, April 29, 1855. Educated in local school, in a school in Steinbach, and in the "Central Schule" in Halbstadt. Prepared himself for teaching and taught in Russia 1873-1878. Married Marie Isaac in 1873. Two children were born to them. Second marriage to Margaret Isaac. Five children were born to this union. Immigrated to America in 1878 and lived at Mountain Lake, Minn., two years. Went to Elkhart, Indiana, in 1880 and assisted John F. Funk in his printing establishment. At this time the "Mennonitische Rundschau" was begun to be published, and Harms was editor of this paper six years. Attended Evangelical College, Naperville, Ill., two years. Moved to Canada, Kans. in 1884 and attended the M. B. Church west of Marion, where he was baptized and received into membership. He began to edit and publish the "Zionsbote" in 1885, which became the official organ of the M. B. Church. At the same time he conducted a printing establishment in Hillsboro, Kans., and continued his publication work there. He was used extensively for preaching and was ordained to the ministry in 1896. During the winter 1897-'98 Mr. and Mrs. Harms made an extended trip to Europe, where they visited many M. B. congregations in Poland and Russia. Upon returning they established their home and printing press at Medford, Okla., where they continued to reside until 1906. He edited the "Zionsbote" twenty one years. Harms has been one of the most noted workers of the M. B. Conference many years. He served the Conference as general secretary, as member on the Board for Foreign Missions, and in its publication work. The Conference found in him one of the strongest advocates of education.—Harms moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in 1906. After two years he settled on a farm at Flowing Well, south of Herbert, Sask. Earning his living by farming, he taught Bible classes during the winter months. He was one of the founders of the Herbert Bible School and its first teacher.—Moved to Seattle, Wash., in 1918 and after one year to Reedley, Calif. Returned to Hillsboro, Kans., 1921. Third marriage to Mrs. Adelgunda Jost Prieb in 1921. At Hillsboro he resumed literary work and served as assistant editor of the "Zionsbote" for a number of years. After the first World War he had a prominent part in relief work on behalf of the Mennonites in Russia. His most noted production is "GESCHICHTE DER MENNONITEN BRUEDERGEMEINDE," 1860-1924. He died at Hillsboro,, Kans., Jan. 7, 1945.

HEIDE, JACOB—

Born near Winkler, Man., Aug. 25, 1888. Converted and baptized at eighteen and joined the M. B. Church. Married Netta Hiebert in 1911. Thirteen children were born to them. The church elected him to the

ministry shortly after his baptism and in 1925 ordained him. Served as innister and leader of the Grossweide M. B. Church many years. Died June 24, 1944.

HEIN, WILHELM—

Born in Marienpol, So. Russia, Dec. 1, 1850. Converted and by baptism received into the M. B. Church in 1876. Married Elizabeth Litke in 1875. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1878 and settled north of Peabody, Kans., and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church. Elected deacon 1904 and ordained 1907. Moved to Hillsboro, Kans., 1919, where he died May 26, 1939.

HEINRICH, PETER—

Born in Norka, Russia, Feb. 20, 1874. There he grew up, was converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church. Immigrated to America in 1893 and located in Portland, Ore. He was elected minister and led the M. B. Church of Portland twenty eight years. Married Barbara Harms in 1922. Moved to Reedley, Calif., in 1930, where he died Dec. 17, 1941.

HEINRICHS, JACOB—

Born in Schardau, So. Russia, July 4, 1856. Came with parents to America in 1874 and settled in Hamilton County, Nebr. Married in 1879 and had eight children. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1881. Was a very active worker in the Henderson M. B. Church and served the same as Sunday School superintendent and deacon many years. Died Jan. 27, 1928.

HERGERT, WILHELM—

Born in the settlement near the Volga River, Russia, March 23, 1839. Married Magdalene Ernst in 1859. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to America in the seventies. Served as minister in the M. B. churches Ebenfeld in Kansas and South Hoffnungsfeld in Oklahoma. Died at Fairview, Okla., Sept. 21, 1912.

HIEBERT, CORNELIUS—

Born in Einlage, Chortiza, So. Russia, Dec. 6, 1835. Converted and baptized in 1862 and joined the M. B. Church. Was among the first members of the M. B. Church in the Chortiza Colony. Married Katharina Wiens in 1860. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to America during the seventies and settled southeast of Hillsboro, Kans. He joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church and was elected and ordained minister. He was active in M. B. Conference work and for some time was member of the Educational Committee of the Conference. Second marriage to Mrs. Elizabeth Petker. Three children were born to them. Third marriage to Mrs. Katharina Warkentin. He died Aug. 11, 1904.

HIEBERT, JOHANN D.—

Born in Chortiza Colony, So. Russia, Feb. 24, 1842. Converted and baptized in 1885 and joined the M. B. Church. Married Katharina Thies-

sen in 1869. Fourteen children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1892, and lived a short time in Kansas and in Texas. Moved to North Enid, Okla., in 1900. Elected to the ministry in the M. B. Church and was leader of the church a number of years. Second marriage was to Susanna Wiens in 1895. Died June 19, 1936.

HIEBERT, JOHN K.—

Born in Einlage, Chortiza, So. Russia, Sept. 8, 1865. Immigrated into U. S. A., together with his parents in 1876. Settled on a farm southeast of Hillsboro, Kans. Received his education in the Gnadenau school. Converted and by baptism joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1880. Married Sarah Eitzen, Dec. 15, 1891. Six children were born to them. Active in church work. Elected to the ministry in 1904 and ordained in 1907. Served the Ebenfeld M. B. Church as presiding minister, 1916-1932. Was a strong advocate of advance in education and took a prominent part in the establishing of Tabor College and was for some time chairman of its Board of Directors. Was a supporter of Bethesda Hospital, Goessel, Kans., and served on its Board of Directors. Served as secretary of the Publication Committee of the M. B. Conference thirty years. Died at Hillsboro, Kans., Jan. 9, 1933.

HIEBERT, NIKOLAI C.—

Born in So. Russia, Jan. 12, 1852. Married Maria Wiens in 1873. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1875 and settled near Mountain Lake, Minn. Converted and baptized in 1889. Elected deacon of the M. B. Church in 1891, and served in this office twenty years. Second marriage to Mrs. Katharina Wiens. Died March 10, 1923.

HUEBERT, HEINRICH—

Born in Munsterburg, So. Russia, in 1810. In early life lived at Liebenau, and Blumenort, Molotschna. Educated at Orloff under Tobias Voth. Converted shortly before 1860 and joined himself with the "Brethren" group. When the "Brethren" separated from the Mennonite Church on Jan. 6, 1860, he was one of the eighteen men who signed the declaration. He had a leading part in the formation of the M. B. Church and May 30, 1860, was elected minister and the first elder of the Church. Huebert took special pains to establish the M. B. Church on positive Biblical principles. Through false accusations he was arrested and held in prison for ten months where he endured acute sufferings. He moved to the Kuban settlement, where he led the M. B. Church as elder until 1877. He died in 1895.

ISAAC, CORNELIUS—

Born in Margenau, So. Russia, Nov. 24, 1866. Grew up in a Christian home, was educated in local school, converted and baptized at eighteen. Elected to the ministry in 1899 and ordained. Traveled as itinerating minister fourteen years. Married Susanna Unruh. Three children were born. Second marriage to Agnes Ferner. Ten children were born to them. Immigrated to America and made their home in Reedley, Calif. There he served the Reedley M. B. Church as minister. Died Feb. 22, 1935.

ISAAC, FRANZ F.—

Born in Tiege, Molotschna, So. Russia, Sept. 27, 1876. Educated in Sagradowka and Memrik. Taught school in the Don Area ten years, in Nikolaifeld, Besabotowka, and Millerowo. Converted in 1898 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Married Aganetha Doerksen in 1899. To them five children were born. Elected to the ministry in the M. B. Church and ordained in 1911 and served as minister in Millerowo. Immigrated to Canada in 1925 and settled in Winnipeg, where he served the M. B. Church as minister for many years and for some time as leader. He served the Canadian M. B. Conference in its City Missions Committee. He was engaged by the British and Foreign Bible Society in its Bible House in Winnipeg many years. Died May 14, 1944.

JANZ BENJAMIN—

Born in Grossweide, So. Russia, March 31, 1849. Converted in 1869 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism the following year. Married Helene Penner, 1872. Ten children were born to them. Elected and ordained minister of the M. B. Church in 1882. Served in the ministry of the Gospel twenty nine years. Immigrated into Canada in 1903 and lived a short time in Manitoba. Settled at Main Center, Sask., where he organized the M. B. Church. Was elected leader of the Church and in 1907 ordained elder. Retired in 1915. Served the Herbert Circuit of M. B. Churches by his itineration and was a prominent leader in the Northern District Conference of the M. B. Church. Died Oct. 27, 1916.

JANZ, HENRY P.—

Born in So. Russia, Feb. 19, 1886. Immigrated with parents to Canada in 1903 and the family settled at Main Centre, Sask. Converted and baptized in 1908. To prepare for Christian service he attended Tabor College and Rochester Theological Seminary. Married Tena Schulz in 1918. Two children were born to them. Served the Main Centre community as school teacher for a number of years, the church as minister, and the Canadian M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist. Ordained to the ministry in 1925. Was invalid during closing years. Wrote many helpful articles on Biblical topics for the "Zionsbote" and the "Rundschau." Died March 4, 1932.

JANTZ, JACOB—

Born in the Molotschna Colony, So. Russia in 1834. Converted in early life, he soon entered the ministry in the M. B. Church. Settled in the Friedensfeld, Miropol Colony, where he had a leading part in establishing the M. B. Church. He was elected elder, and in 1875 ordained. He traveled extensively as evangelist. He has been one of the most outstanding ministers and leaders in the M. B. Church in Russia from 1875 to 1910.

JANZEN, ADOLPH—

Born in Germany, April 13, 1867. Parents died when he was a small boy. Adopted by an uncle and taken to America in 1874. Grew up at Buhler, Kans. Converted and joined the Hebron Mennonite Church. Mar-

ried Maria Froese in 1892. Four children were born to them. Settled at Hooker, Okla., 1902, where he joined the M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry in 1913 and ordained in 1917. Later he lived at Buhler, Kans., Reedley, Calif., and Orland, Calif. Died Jan. 1, 1940.

JANZEN, FRANK A.—

Born near Mountain Lake, Minn., June 30, 1880. Converted in 1901 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Felt definite call to work for his Lord. Attended the Bible Academy at Mountain Lake and in 1904 entered the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, New York. Graduated in 1907. Attended Moody Bible Institute one summer. Married Elizabeth Dickman in 1907. Three sons were born to them. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist, 1907-1910. Went together with wife to India as M. B. missionaries in 1910. Stationed for short time at Nagar Kurnool. Procured sanction for a mission station at Wanaparty and moved there in Oct. 1914. Built the Wanaparty station, evangelized the field, established an indigenous church in 1916, opened a boarding school and began a dispensary. Went to America on furlough in 1919 and returned to India in 1920 and continued the work at Wanaparty, where he died Oct. 8, 1927.

JANZEN, FRANZ F.—

Born in Pordenau, So. Russia, May 30, 1857. Converted and baptized in 1893. Married Elizabeth Harder in 1881. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1888 and settled in Boone County, Nebr. Later lived in Butler County, Kans., at Medford Okla., at Inola, Okla., at Hepburn, Sask., and since 1924 at Orland and Chico, Calif. He was elected to the ministry in 1916 and served the M. B. Church in the preaching of God's Word where he resided. Died May 15, 1932.

JUST, MARTIN M.—

Born in the Don River Valley, Russia, July 14, 1866. Immigrated with parents into U. S. A., in 1880 and settled west of Aulne, Marion County, Kans. Attended the Bible School conducted by J. F. Harms at Canada, Kans., during the winter 1885-'86. Married Anna Schapanski on Oct. 27, 1887. Second marriage to Hannah Patzkowski, Aug. 22, 1894. Nine children were born. Moved to a homestead at Isabella, Major County, Okla., in 1895. Just was converted in 1888 and by baptism had joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in Kansas. In Oklahoma he helped establish the South Hoffnungsfeld M. B. Church where he was elected deacon in 1896. In 1897 the church elected him to the ministry and in 1900 ordained him. In 1905 he was ordained elder. He served the South Hoffnungsfeld M. B. Church as presiding minister twenty two years. He traveled extensively and was used much in other M. B. churches in Oklahoma. In the M. B. General Conference Just served as secretary of the Home Mission Committee from 1903 to 1909, and on the Foreign Mission Board from 1909 to 1919. He was moderator of the General Conference, 1915-1919. In the Southern District Conference he served as secretary of the Home Mission Committee from 1909 to 1919 and as

moderator for three consecutive one-year terms. He took an active part in the educational efforts of the M. B. Church and for some time served the Conference on its educational committee. He assisted in the establishing of Tabor College and has been a member on the Board of Directors of the College. He died in his home near Isabella, Okla. Aug. 22, 1919.

KLASSEN, DAVID K.—

Born in Neukronsweide, Russia, April 11, 1854. Both parents died when he was a small child. Married to Agatha Sawatzky in 1875. Converted in 1884 and baptized the following year. He was immediately used as minister in the M. B. Church and later ordained. He immigrated to Canada and located at Borden, Sask., at the time when this settlement was made. He helped establish the Borden M. B. Church and became its first presiding minister. In addition he took a leading part in the church activities of the Rosthern Circuit of the M. B. Church. He died at Dalmeny, Sask., April 1, 1921.

KLIEWER, CORNELIUS J.—

Born in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, So. Russia, Jan. 10, 1869. Parents immigrated into U. S. A., in 1875 and settled near Henderson, Nebr., Educated at York, Nebr., Hesston, Kans., and Bethel College, Newton, Kans. Married Agnes Hiebert in 1896. Eight children were born to them. Entered teaching profession and taught school in the Henderson community fourteen years. Moved to Canada in 1918, where he lived at Hepburn, Menon and Dalmeny in Saskatchewan. Taught three more years. He was an active church worker, was choir leader, Sunday School worker, and minister. Served the Canadian M. B. Conference as evangelist for a number of years. Was house father of the Dalmeny Bible School for some time. Died Sept. 14, 1940.

KLIEWER, JACOB—

Born in Russian Poland, Feb. 11, 1854. Immigrated to America in 1877 and settled near Hillsboro, Kans. Married Julia Foth. Converted and baptized in 1881 and received into the M. B. Church. Moved to Fairview, Okla., in 1892 where he helped establish the North Hoffnungs-feld Church. He was elected to the ministry and served the M. B. Church as minister seventeen years. Moved to California in 1909 and died at Reedley Jan. 10, 1915.

KLIEWER, JOHANN J.—

Born in Alexandertal, Molotschna, So. Russia, Sept. 1, 1859. Immigrated with parents to America in 1875 and settled in Hamilton, County, Nebr. There he was educated and in 1884 married Susanna Abrahams. They were blessed with ten children. Joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1896. The Henderson church elected him to the ministry in 1898 and two years later ordained him. Elected elder and leader of the church in 1902 and ordained as elder in 1908. Served the church as presiding minister until 1924. He visited the smaller M. B. churches

in Nebraska frequently and helped them greatly. Kliewer was an active conference worker and one of the first to advocate the opening of a city mission. When steps were taken by the M. B. Conference in 1907 to begin a City Mission, he was elected chairman of the City Mission Committee and served on this committee many years. He had an active part in the activities in the Central District Conference and at times served as chairman. After 1924 he lived at Newport, Wash., Dallas, Ore., Shafter, Calif., and again at Henderson, Nebr., where he died Jan. 30, 1932.

KOHFELD, HEINRICH—

Born in Rudnerweide, So. Russia, Jan. 24, 1863. The family immigrated to America in 1877 and settled in Kansas. Converted in his youth and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Married Lizzie Unruh in 1892. To them six children were born. They made their home in Oklahoma shortly after marriage. When the M. B. Conference began the Mission to the Comanche Indians in Oklahoma in 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Kohfeld were appointed as first missionaries. They opened the Post Oak Mission at Indianola in 1894 and continued in this service until 1907. They moved to California in 1912 and lived at Bakersfield and Rosedale. There Kohfeld assisted as minister in the M. B. Church. Died Jan. 1, 1932.

KROEKER, ABRAHAM J.—

Born in Roserort, Halbstadt Circuit, Molotschna, So. Russia, Dec. 11, 1863. Received a fairly good education in local schools and through private instruction. Began to teach at seventeen and taught village schools 1881-1888. Converted at nineteen and later joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Went to Roumania in 1891 and labored there as missionary three years. Married Agatha Langeman, Sept. 10, 1892. Nine children were born to them. Established his home in Spat, Crimea in 1894, and farmed ten years. Became engaged in publication work in 1897. Published a Christian family calendar annually from 1897 to 1918 and a Christian year book from 1900 to 1905. From 1899 to 1917 he published a Christian daily sheet calendar. All of these publications received a wide circulation among Mennonites in Russia and America. He edited and published the "Friedensstimme" from 1903 to 1920. This periodical served the M. B. Church in Russia as official organ and had a wide circle of readers. In 1904 he, together with other Brethren, established the publishing house, Raduga, at Halbstadt, Molotschna, of which he was manager until 1920. Kroeker left Russia in 1922 and, by way of Constantinople, came to America. He lived in Winnipeg, Canada, one year and then came into U. S. A. and made his home in Mountain Lake, Minn. His family followed in 1924. In Mountain Lake he opened a book store and also published several books. He died at Mountain Lake, Minn., Nov. 22, 1944.

KROEKER, JACOB—

Born in Gnadental, Molotschna, So. Russia, Nov. 13, 1872. He grew up and received his education at Spat, Crimea. Taught school two years. Married Anna Langeman in 1893. Studied in the Baptist Theological Seminary, Hamburg, Germany, four years. Ordained minister and elder

of the M. B. Church in 1898. Served the M. B. Church as traveling evangelist for some time. Lived at Halbstadt a number of years and assisted Abr. Kroeker in the publishing of the "Friedenstimme" and other publications. Came in touch with the evangelical movement in Germany through Dr. Baedeker and began to attend and take part in the Alliance Conference at Blankenberg, Germany. At that time he took the initiative in holding Bible Conferences in Russia. He moved to Wernigerode, Germany in 1910 and continued with Bible Conference and with his studies. He wrote a number of books which received a large circulation among Mennonites and in other circles. The most widely read books are, "Der verborgene Umgang mit Gott.", "Allein mit dem Meister," "Gottes Segentraeger." With other he established the Mission, "Licht dem Osten", a mission aimed at evangelizing the Slavonic people. He established a Seminary for the training of ministers and mission workers. Began to publish his writings in a series of volumes entitled, "Das Lebendige Wort." He died at Stuttgart, Germany, Dec. 12, 1948. (From an article by C. Krahn, in "Mennonische Rundschau" much condensed.)

KROEKER, JACOB A.—

Born on a farm near Winkler, Man., Canada, Aug. 11, 1879. Converted at sixteen and joined M. B. Church by baptism. Began a business in Winkler and assisted many in the community in their legal matters and title papers. Was exceedingly active and useful in the Winkler M. B. Church. Worked in Sunday School, among young people and led the choir thirty six years. Was trustee in the town school, promoter of the Bible School and a staunch supporter of the local hospital. Served the M. B. General Conference as Assistant Treasurer for Canada of the Board of Foreign Missions from 1941 to 1945. Married Annie Nickel in 1905, and to them eight children were born. Died July 31, 1945.

LANGHOFER, DAVID—

Born in Strassburg, Russia, March 15, 1884. Came with parents to America and settled at Dorrance, Russell County, Kansas, in 1898. Married Elenor Reab in 1904. Five children were born. Converted at twenty two and baptized. When the M. B. Church at Dorrance was organized he became member of it. Served the church as minister and leader a number of years. Died at Dinuba, Calif., Sept. 29, 1939.

LEPP, AARON—

Born in the Chortiza Colony, Russia, in 1829. Was converted and by baptism joined the Einlage M. B. Church in the time of its beginning. Soon elected minister and assistant to Elder Abr. Unger and his successor. Served the Einlage M. B. Church as elder 1876-1903.

LOEWEN, JACOB—

Born in Waldheim, So. Russia, Oct. 5, 1855. He came with his parents to America in 1874 and settled on a farm southeast of Hillsboro, Kansas. Converted and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1876 by baptism. Served the church as choir leader and as Sunday School teacher

many years. Elected deacon in 1904 and ordained in 1907. Rendered a highly valued service to a large community by setting dislocated bones and extracting teeth. Upon retiring made his home in Hillsboro, Kans. Died June 19, 1941.

LOHRENTZ, HENRY W.—

Born on a farm southwest of Moundridge, Kans., Feb. 2, 1878. His parents were Heinrich and Elizabeth (Wiens) Lohrenz. Attended local school and a parochial school near Buhler, Kans. Converted, baptized, and joined the M. B. Church in 1896, while residing in Butler County, Kans.—Enrolled in German Department School of the M. B. Church at McPherson, Kans., in 1900 and completed the course. Completed college course of McPherson College and graduated with A. B. degree in 1908. Married Anna M. Friesen Dec. 26, 1906 and established his own home. Six children were born to them.—Elected to the ministry by the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1904 and ordained in 1907. Rendered valuable service to the M. B. Church as a preacher of God's Word for forty-one years. Traveled extensively and preached on many special occasions. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist for two years. Served the M. B. Conference in its publishing house for some time and as assistant editor of the "Zionsbote" a short time and as editor of the Sunday School Quarterly for a number of years. Lohrenz has done the greater part of his life-service in connection with the educational efforts of the M. B. Church. Took a leading part in establishing Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kans., in 1908. The Board of Directors elected him to the presidency of the school, a position he held twenty-three years. Taught natural sciences and Biblical subjects in addition to administrative duties. Continued post graduate studies and received the M. A. degree from Kansas State University in 1911. Attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J. The Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, conferred on him the D. D. degree in 1929.—Taught biology and Bible in Bethel College 1932-'34 and Bible in the Corn, Okla., Bible Academy one year. Served as dean of the Theological College of Tabor College, 1935-1941, and as professor of New Testament four years more. Lohrenz rendered valuable services in the activities of the M. B. Conference. In early years he was often used for the secretarial work. Elected moderator of the M. B. General Conference for four three-year terms and served the Southern District Conference nine one-year terms. He served as chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions of the M. B. Church, 1919-1936 and as executive secretary and treasurer 1936-1945. In connection with these duties he traveled extensively and represented the cause of foreign missions in churches and at conferences. He edited several booklets on missions, and wrote many articles which were published in the "Zionsbote." He died at Hillsboro, Kans., March 16, 1945.

MARTENS, FRANZ W.—

Born in Huttertal, near Melitopol, Russia, May 17, 1869. Grew up in Orloff, Sagrafka. Received a good education through diligent study. Converted at an early age and joined the Mennonite Church. Began to

teach at seventeen and continued in this profession many years. Married Katharina Zacharias in 1891. Eight children were born to them. Elected minister 1894 and ordained the following year. Ordained elder in 1902. Left Mennonite Church in 1907 and with others established the Orloff Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church which he served as presiding minister. When Machnoff bands raided Sagradofka in 1918 a son, a son-in-law and many friends were killed. Immigrated to Canada in 1924 and joined the M. B. Church. Settled at Blumenord, Sask., where he helped organize the M. B. Church and served it as presiding minister. Preached frequently in surrounding M. B. Churches. Second marriage to Mrs. Heinrich Reimer in 1930. Third marriage to Mrs. Peter Penner, 1940. Died at Kitchener, Ont. Jan. 21, 1943.

MARTENS, HENRY A.—

Born near Buhler, Kans., May 9, 1885. Converted at nineteen and joined the Hebron Mennonite Church. Married Anna Wall in 1908. Joined the M. B. Church at Buhler, Kans., in 1934. The M. B. General Conference elected him to the Board of Trustees in 1936 and he was made treasurer and field-worker of this board. For several years he traveled extensively and built up the endowment fund of the Conference. He died Aug. 11, 1945.

MARTENS, JACOB J.—

Born in Neudorf, So. Russia, Nov. 14, 1850. Married Katharina Wieler in 1870. Converted and baptized in 1873 and joined the M. B. Church. Immediately became a helpful worker in Sunday School and church. Elected minister and was active in mission work, including evangelistic efforts among Russians. Immigrated into Canada and settled with other pioneers in the Herbert, Sask., area about 1905. There he was immediately ordained and he had a leading part in establishing the churches of the Herbert Circuit of M. B. Churches. His chief ministry was in the churches, Herbert, and Main Centre. Died Oct. 21, 1919.

MILLER, HEINRICH P.—

Born in Norka, Russia, Nov. 6, 1881. Came with parents to America in 1892 and settled near Harvard, Neb. Converted, baptized and joined the Eldorado church as acting minister and leader a number of years. Married Dora Traudt in 1904. Second marriage to Mrs. Maria Wall Buller in 1935. Died July 4, 1941.

NEUFELD, ABRAHAM J.—

Born in Sparrau, So. Russia, June 4, 1869. Came with parents to America in 1878 and settled in Kansas. Converted and baptized 1890. Married Julia Goertz 1897. Moved to Cooper, Okla., in 1901 and to Boyd, Okla., in 1905. At Boyd he helped establish the M. B. Church and in 1931 was elected deacon and later ordained. Died Jan. 5, 1940.

NEUFELD, HERMAN ABRAM—

Born in Jarkiwka, Gouv. Jekaterinoslav, So. Russia, June 24, 1860. His educational opportunities in childhood were very limited. Through

constant study and due to mental keenness he gained a wide range and a thorough mastery of the Scriptures in particular. Married Katharina Klassen in 1883 and established his home in Sergejewka, Taurida, where he worked in an iron foundry for a living. He was blessed with a family of thirteen children. —Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church in 1884. Began to preach the following year and in 1885 was ordained to the ministry. Beginning with 1892 he became an itinerating minister, "Reiseprediger" of the M. B. Church and he continued in this work twenty five years. Conducted many meetings in various M. B. congregations and made visits to Turkestan and Siberia four times. Made two trips to Germany for Bible Conferences. Ordained elder in 1903 and became an outstanding leader of the M. B. Church in Russia, serving as moderator of the Conference and on various important committees.—Immigrated to Canada in 1923 and established his home in Winkler, Man. Visited M. B. churches in Canada and in U. S. A., and delivered addresses on Biblical subjects and gave expositional studies of the Scriptures. Wrote many valuable articles for periodicals. Published a booklet, "Handbuch fuer Prediger." Died at Winkler, Man., Sept. 28, 1931.

NEUFELD, HEINRICH A.—

Born in Chortiza Colony, Russia, May 3, 1865. His father died when he was a child. Grew up among other people. Converted and baptized at eighteen and joined the M. B. Church. Began to preach in 1884. Married Anna Martens in 1891. Four children were born to them. Second marriage to Aganetha Dueck in 1902 and seven children were born to them. After a successful ministry in Russia he immigrated to the U. S. A., in 1909 and located at Carpenter, So. Dak.. Moved to Canada in 1911 and settled on a farm at Herbert, Sask., and later lived in Herbert. Served the Herbert M. B. Church as minister many years. Became an outstanding leader of the Canadian M. B. Conference. Traveled much as evangelist and for holding Bible Readings. Died at Herbert Sask., May 13, 1933.

NEUFELD, JOHANN W.—

Born in Neudorf, So. Russia, July 28, 1852. Converted at twenty and joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1876. Elected to the ministry a short time after baptism and later ordained. Married Maria Penner in 1878. Ten children were born. Immigrated to Canada in 1903 and lived in Manitoba four years. Moved to Turnhill, Sask., in 1907 where he helped to establish the Bethania M. B. Church and became its first minister and leader. Served this church until 1920. Moved to California where he lived in Reedley one year and in Los Angeles twenty two years. Served as minister in the Los Angeles M. B. Church. Died Sept. 3, 1943.

NEUFELD, KORNELIUS G.—

Born in Alexanderkron, Molotschna, So. Russia, Feb. 25, 1871. Converted in early life and joined M. B. Church by baptism. For his higher education he attended St. Chrischona School, Basel, Switzerland and Spurgeon's Pastor's College in London, England. Later he attended sev-

eral other schools in central Europe for short periods. Taught in Russian Mennonite schools twenty years and established the first co-educational school among Mennonites at Davlekanovo, Neu Samara. Married Maria Friesen in 1895. Four children were born to them. Went to Germany about 1914 and from there immigrated to America, where he resided at a number of places in California. He served as minister of the M. B. Church in Russia as well as in America. In 1916 he married Louise Schapansky and they lived at Reedley, Long Beach, Rosedale and Shafter. Died May 2, 1946.

NEUFELD, PETER—

Born in Sparrau, So. Russia, March 7, 1838. Taught school in the German and Russian languages. Converted in 1870, and in 1871 joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Married Katharina Quiring in 1858. Thirteen children were born to them. Lived in Sergejewka, Fuerstenland, 1876-1886, where the M. B. Church elected him to the ministry and ordained him. Immigrated to America, 1886 and located in Hillsboro, Kans., where he served the M. B. Church as minister five years. Taught school at Inman, Kans., for three years. Moved to Corn, Okla., in 1894 where he served the M. B. Church as minister until 1909 when he moved to California. Returned to Corn, Okla., in 1914, where he died in 1918. His daughter Elizabeth Neufeld, was one of the first M. B. missionaries to India.

NEUFELD, PETER H.—

Born in Friedensfeld, So. Russia, June 19, 1874. Came with parents to America in 1889 and settled near Mountain Lake, Minn. Converted and baptized in 1890. Attended Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y. Married Helena Voth in 1894. Twelve children were born to them. After marriage he entered teaching profession and taught public school in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba. In all he taught thirty two years. Elected to the ministry at Munich, N. Dak., in 1898 and ordained at Winkler, Manitoba, eight years later. Moved to Vanderhoof, B. C., in 1918, but returned to Winkler, Man., after three years. Took part in M. B. Conference activities and served the Canadian M. B. Conference as secretary on a number of occasions. Died at Yarrow, B. C., Aug. 26, 1941.

NICKEL, CORNELIUS—

Born in So. Russia, in March, 1846, where he grew up, was converted and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Immigrated to America about 1877. Married Katharina Lepke and established his home in the new settlement in Woodson County, Kans. Elected to the ministry in 1883 and later ordained. When the members of the M. B. Church in Woodson County left, Nickel moved to the Ebenfeld community near Hillsboro, Kans. There he served the Ebenfeld M. B. Church as minister for several years. Died May 27, 1902.

NICKEL, PETER—

Born in Lower Chortiza, So. Russia, May 10, 1854. Married Maria Wiebe. Twelve children were born to them. Converted in 1883 and by

baptism joined the M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry and ordained in 1893. Immigrated to Canada in 1902. Lived one year in Man., six years at Springfield, Sask., and after that at Hepburn, Sask. He served the Hepburn M. B. Church as minister from 1907 until old age compelled him to retire. Died Sept. 25, 1945.

NIKKEL, FRANK H.—

Born in Woodson County, Kans., Nov. 28, 1880. Lived short time in Butler County, Kans. From there moved to Corn, Okla., Attended the German Department School of the M. B. Church in McPherson, Kans. Taught school in Kansas and Oklahoma. Married Sarah Thiessen in 1905. Eleven children were born to them. Farmed for some time in Oklahoma, Texas, and California. Elected deacon of the M. B. Church and later minister. Served the M. B. Church at Blaine, Washington, a short time as minister and leader. Directed the Smith Center Mission at Shafter, Calif., a number of years. Died at Shafter, Calif., March 8, 1947.

PANKRATZ, GERHARD M.—

Born in Gnadenheim, So. Russia, Jan. 12, 1869. Immigrated with parents to America in 1878 and settled near Goessel, Kans. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church in 1883. Attended a Bible School for some time. Married Maria Harms in 1890. One daughter was born to them. Married Katharina Wiens in 1892. To this union ten children were born. Served the M. B. Southern District Conference as traveling evangelist, 1912-1919. Ministered to the M. B. Church in Inman, Kans., six years.

PATZKOWSKY, AUGUST F.—

Born at Hansan, Saratov, Russia, Feb. 20, 1871. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1875. After a brief stay in Illinois the family settled in the Ebenfeld community near Hillsboro, Kans. Took a homestead in the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma in 1893 where he settled near Isabella. Married Lizzie Petker in 1894. Two sons were born to them. Second marriage to Maria Krause in 1889. Four children were born to them. Converted and baptized in 1893. Joined the South Fairview M. B. Church. Elected minister in 1921 and ordained in 1925. Died at Fairview, Okla., Jan. 9, 1949.

PAULS, BERNHARD—

Born in Rosenthal, near Ekaterinoslav, Russia, Feb. 27, 1833. Married Maria Peters in 1856. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church in 1869. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1876 and settled in Woodson County, Kans., where he helped establish the M. B. Church. There he was soon elected minister and later ordained. He was an active M. B. Conference worker during the early years and served on the Committee for missions. Later he moved to Lehigh, Kans., where he served the M. B. Church as minister. Died at Lehigh, Kans., June 4, 1904.

PENNER, JACOB B.—

Born in Gnadental, So. Russia, Feb. 10, 1877. Converted in 1891. Came with parents to Manitoba, Canada, in 1892 and settled in the village Waldheim. Joined the Winkler, M. B. Church by baptism in 1893. Married Katharina Dyck in 1902. Five children were born to them. Lived in Saskatchewan a short time. Returned to Manitoba and established their home at Kronsgart near Winkler. Penner had a leading part in establishing the Kronsgart M. B. Church as a branch of the Winkler Church. Active in Sunday School and interested in missions. Elected minister in 1907 and ordained in 1916. Married Elizabeth Enns in 1929. Died July 24, 1944.

PENNER, JOHN S.—

Born near Hillsboro, Kans., June 15, 1884. Converted in 1903 and by baptism joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church. Married Katharina Loewen in 1907. Seven children were born to them. Lived at Ebenfeld, in Hillsboro, at Coldwater, Texas, and at Reedley, Calif. Elected and ordained as deacon in the M. B. Church at Coldwater. Served the Reedley M. B. church as deacon a number of years. Died at Reedley, Calif., Nov. 4, 1947.

PENNER, PETER E.—

Born in Crimea, Russia, in Oct. 1870. Immigrated with parents to U. S. A., about 1875 and settled near Marion, S. Dak. Converted in youth and by baptism joined the M. B. Church at Silver Lake, S. Dak. Educated at Bethel College and in the institution, "Licht und Hoffnung," in Cleveland, Ohio. Entered the ministry and was ordained in 1906. Preached the Word of God until his death. Was a good Bible expositor and wrote many articles on Biblical themes which were published in Mennonite papers. Wrote a number of pamphlets and poems. His Bible expositions and his writings have been an edification to many. Was a great personal worker. Established the John Three Sixteen Mission in Southern Texas, which aimed at evangelizing the Mexicans of that area. Married Verna Geiser in 1906 and she assisted him in his ministries until her death in 1926. Penner died at Goessel, Kans., July 30, 1944, and was interred at Buhler, Kansas.

PETERS, JOHANN H.—

Born in Kornswende, So. Russia, Feb. 23, 1865. Joined the M. B. Church by baptism at the time of his conversion. Married Anna Fast. Immigrated with his family to Canada in 1903 and settled at Neu Hoffnung, near Langham, Sask. He established the Neu Hoffnung M. B. Church, was elected minister, and in 1916 was ordained. He led this church and ministered to it until shortly before his death, March 20, 1945.

PRIEB, JACOB E.—

Born near Hillsboro, Kans., Dec. 1, 1883. Converted and by baptism joined the K. M. B. Church at Gnadenau in 1900. Married Agnes Barkman in 1905. Seven children were born to them. Moved to Canada in 1906 and settled at Flowing Well, Sask. Helped establish the M. B. congregation at Flowing Well, which was named Gnadenau. Elected and ordained as

deacon in 1915, and served in this office over thirty years. Died at Herbert, Sask., Aug. 31, 1949.

QUIRING, JACOB—

Born in Wernersdorf, So. Russia, May 11, 1860. Came with his parents to America in 1875 and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Married Anna Regehr in 1882. Eight children were born. Converted and baptized in 1889. Second marriage to Elizabeth Wiens Unruh in 1889. Three children were born to them. Moved to Mountain Lake, Minn. in 1917. Elected deacon in 1918 and ordained, 1920. Rendered faithful service to the church until his death, Feb. 28, 1939.

REDEKOP, BENJAMIN—

Born in Neudorf, So. Russia, in 1855. Married Susanna Klassen in 1874. Seven children were born to them. Second marriage to Susanna Kasper. Eleven children were born. Converted in 1879 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. The Lord called him to the ministry and in 1888 he was ordained. Immigrated to Canada in 1913 and lived three years in Herbert, Sask., where he assisted as minister in the M. B. Church. Moved to Lustre, Mont., in 1916. Died July 6, 1923.

REGEHR, ISAAC P.—

Born in Gnadental, So. Russia, July 30, 1864. Received a good education in youth. Began to teach at seventeen and continued in this profession twenty one years. Converted and baptized in 1887. Elected to the ministry of the M. B. Church soon after baptism and ordained in 1893. Married Elizabeth Letkeman in 1889. Nine children were born. Acquired a good knowledge of the Bible and for some time taught religion in the Alexanderkron Central Schule. Immigrated to Canada in 1926 and resided one year in Hepburn, Sask., where he taught in the Bible School. Moved to Herbert, Sask., where he taught one and one half years in the Herbert Bible School. Died Jan. 23, 1930.

REGIER, CORNELIUS P.—

Born in Kleefeld, So. Russia, Dec. 27, 1872. Parents came to America in 1876 and settled near Henderson, Nebr. Attended school in York, Nebr. Fort Wayne, Ind., Cleveland, Ohio, and Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. Converted and baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1900. Moved to Enid, Okla., about 1897. Helped in the North Enid M. B. Church. Assisted in establishing the M. B. Church in Enid. Did some mission work in Enid. Served the M. B. General Conference as treasurer of its Home Mission Committee 1904-1909 and the Southern District Conference as treasurer of its Home Mission Committee from 1910 to 1924. Married Katharina Friesen. Three children were born to them. Died at Enid, Okla., in March, 1947.

REGIER, JOHANN J.—

Born in the Molotschna Colony, So. Russia, March 22, 1839. Married Katharina Franz in 1858. Seven children were born. Was converted in 1870 and baptized and joined the M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry

soon after baptism and became one of the leaders of the early M. B. Church. He immigrated to America in 1879 and settled in Boone County, Nebr. There he helped establish the M. B. Church and served as minister and leader. Ordained elder in 1881. In 1882 the Henderson M. B. Church called him to be its elder, a position in which he served until 1902. Regier took a leading part in the M. B. Conference activities. He served as chairman at the first M. B. Conference in 1879. He served as itinerating minister of the Conference many years and took especial care of the churches in Nebr. Made an extended visit to Russia in 1896. Died at Henderson, Nebr., July 8, 1902.

REGIER, JOHN S.—

Born in Klippenfeld Molotschna, So. Russia, March 6, 1879. Came to America with his parents in 1879. Grew up near Henderson, Nebr. Was converted in 1896 while sick with smallpox when returning from a visit to Russia. He was baptized and joined the M. B. Church at Henderson in 1896. He received fairly good schooling and gained a thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Married Anna Wall, June 7, 1900. Seven children were born to them. Regier established his home at Henderson, Nebr. Later he lived at Reedley, Calif., and at Hillsboro, Kans., and again returned to Henderson, Nebr. Regier entered the Christian ministry and was ordained. He served the M. B. Church as traveling evangelist and Bible lecturer 1901-1918. Tabor College frequently called him to lecture at its Bible Conferences. He died at Henderson, Nebr., Aug. 22, 1918.

REGIER, PETER—

Born in Hierschau, So. Russia, Oct. 21, 1847. Married Katherina Quiring. Twelve children were born to them. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1873. Immigrated to America in 1876. After a short stay in Minnesota, he settled at Henderson, Nebr. Was one of the founders of the M. B. Church at Henderson and became its first leader. Moved to North Enid, Okla., in 1897, where he became presiding minister of the M. B. Church and was ordained elder in 1902. He is the writer of "Kurzgefasste Geschichte der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde." Died July 14, 1904.

REGIER, PETER P.—

Born in So. Russia, April 13, 1871. Immigrated with parents to U. S. A. in 1876 and settled in York County, Nebr. Converted and baptized in 1889 and joined the M. B. Church at Henderson. Attended the Rochester Theological Seminary. Taught in a Bible School at Henderson, Nebr. and later at Enid, Okla. Married Maria Schellenberg in 1895 and the following year established his home at North Enid, Okla. Seven children were born to them. Helped build up the North Enid M. B. Church. Elected minister in 1905 and ordained in 1913. Was minister of God's Word forty nine years. Died March 16, 1944.

REIMCHE, GEORGE—

Born in So. Russia, Oct. 5, 1870. Immigrated to America in 1876 and located at first in Marion County, Kans. There he was converted and joined the M. B. Church. Lived a short time in Oklahoma. Married Carolina Seibel in 1889. Eleven children were born to them. Lived several years in S. Dak. and from there moved to Woodrow, Sask. There he helped to found the M. B. Church and was elected minister. He was ordained in 1917. Moved to Lodi, Calif., in 1921, where he died Sept. 17, 1928.

REIMER, JACOB—

Born in Wernersdorf, Molotschna, So. Russia, Sept. 12, 1863. There he grew up and received his education in the local schools. Later went to Central Asia where he was converted and joined the Peter's Church. This group later joined the M. B. Church and thus Reimer became a member of the M. B. Church by baptism in 1885. Married Maria Wedel in 1885. Five children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1893 and settled near Buhler, Kans. Took a homestead at Corn, Okla., in 1894 and settled there. He helped to build up the Corn and Bessie M. B. congregations. Elected to the ministry in 1903 and ordained in 1907. Elected to the leadership of the Bessie M. B. Church in 1915 and ordained elder in 1919. Second marriage to Minnie Kiehn in 1918. Moved to Corn in 1929, where he died Dec. 22, 1935.

REIMER, JACOB D.—

Born in Wernersdorf, Molotschna, So. Russia, July 27, 1880. Parents moved to Auliata, Asiatic Russia a year after his birth. There he grew up. Converted in 1897 and baptized the following year. Immigrated to the U. S. A. in 1900 and settled near Goessel, Kans. Later moved to western Kansas where he received the Lord's call for definite Christian service in 1908. Was married in 1903 to Susie Schultz and they had a family of twelve children. Elected to the ministry of the M. B. Church at Goessel, Kans., in 1917, where he served the church a number of years. He has later served as minister at Colby, Kans., and at Johnstown, Colo. Appointed evangelist by the Southern District Conference in 1924, and traveled extensively. Stationed as extension worker in Colorado in 1927. Died Nov. 30, 1938.

REIMER, JACOB WILHELM—

Born in Alexanderkron, Molotschna, So. Russia, March 9, 1860. After completing the local village school he entered the Orloff Central Schule at thirteen. Began to teach in Mennonite schools at seventeen and continued teaching six years. Converted at twenty-three through the preaching of Dr. F. W. Baedeker. He resigned his teaching post and joined the M. B. Church by baptism and began to preach. Meanwhile he gained a remarkable knowledge of the Bible through intensive study. Married Gertrude Neustaedter, April 12, 1887. They made their home in Rueckenau. Ten children were born to them. The M. B. Conference appointed Reimer as itinerating minister, "Reiseprediger," and ordained him to the ministry in 1900. He had a most effective ministry over a period of thirty-five

years and conducted meetings in all the M. B. congregations in Russia as well as in other circles. Many were converted through his preaching. He made extended tours to the Caucasus, Turkestan, Siberia, and to Germany, where he gave Bible lectures at the Blankenburg Conferences. At times he accompanied Dr. Baedeker on his tours in Russia and served as his interpreter. He visited the U. S. A., in 1889 and conducted meetings in many M. B. Churches. Reimer was largely instrumental in establishing the Mennonite Central Schule in his birthplace, Alexanderkron. His second marriage was to Mrs. Margaret Peters Rempel in 1923. He immigrated to Canada in 1924, and lived in Ontario four years, then after a ten month's stay in Winnipeg, made his home in Steinbach, Manitoba, where he lived thirteen years. Reimer traveled much in Canada and preached very effectively in many M. B. congregations. His ministry extended also into other churches. He has written valuable articles for Mennonite papers. His book, "Der Wundervolle Ratsschluss Gottes mit der Menschheit," has been widely read. He continued to preach even up to his eighty seventh year. In Oct., 1942, he moved to Sardis, British Columbia, and after a fruitful ministerial service of sixty five years he died on March 6, 1948.

REMPEL, JACOB—

Born in Schoenau, So. Russia, May 4, 1874. Came to America in 1892, and settled near Henderson, Nebr. There he was converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church. Married Sarah Toews in 1894. Twelve children were born to them. Settled on a farm at North Enid, Okla., in 1918. Soon after he settled there the M. B. Church elected him deacon and ordained him several years later. He was influential and helpful in establishing the Bible School of the North Enid M. B. Church. He died at Enid, Sept. 11, 1946.

REMPEL, PETER P.—

Born in South Russia, Aug. 12, 1865. Received a good education in early life. Was converted at the age of twenty-eight and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. He attended the school of the Evangelischer Pilger Missionsanstalt, St. Chrischona, Basel, Switzerland for his theological training. Married Theresia Esau, July 31, 1897, and established a home in the Memrik Colony. A son and two daughters were born to them. He began to do evangelistic work in the M. B. churches in Russia and was ordained in 1900.—Rempel immigrated to America in 1900 and established his home in Kansas where he continued his studies, especially the study of English. He served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist eight years and was much in demand for such work. Taught Bible and Theology in Tabor College from 1908 to 1913. The M. B. Church of Hillsboro, Kans., elected him presiding minister in 1909 and ordained him elder the following year. He served in this position until 1914. Rempel went to California in 1914 where he ministered to the M. B. Church at Shafter four years, and to the Church in Los Angeles nine years. He died at Shafter, Calif., April 7, 1938.

REISBICH, HEINRICH—

Born in Norka, Volga area, Russia, March 16, 1839. Married Kathrin-liesbeth Bauer in 1862. They were blessed with a family of twelve children. Immigrated to America in 1878, and settled in Nebraska. Converted shortly after arrival in Nebraska. Joined M. B. Church by baptism. He immediately entered the ministry and was very active in the small M. B. congregations of the "Volga Brethren," and itinerated extensively. He went to Portland, Oregon, about 1892, where he established and led an M. B. congregation for some time. Died in Portland, Ore., May 20, 1925.

RICHERT, JACOB—

Born in Waldheim, So. Russia, Jan. 24, 1849, but grew up in Altonau, where he received his schooling. Later he attended the "Central Schule" in Gnadenfeld. Immigrated to America in 1878 and settled in Reno County, Kans., where he joined the Ebenezer M. B. Church by immersion. Married Maria Kliewer in 1879. One daughter was born to them. Elected to the ministry in 1880. His second marriage was to Anna Nachtigal in 1881 and to them nine children were born. Ordained to the ministry in 1887. After farming and teaching in Kansas twelve years, Richert moved to Corn, Okla., where he became a minister in the Corn M. B. Church. He visited Russia in 1910. Died July 3, 1916.

RICHERT, PETER—

Born in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, So. Russia, June 5, 1850. Married Agatha Quiring in 1871. Four children were born to them and they adopted two. Converted in 1873 and baptized in 1880 when he joined the M. B. Church. Immigrated to America in 1874 and settled in Marion County, Kans. Elected to the ministry soon after his baptism. Was engaged in preaching the Word for many years. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist for some time. Studied medicine, in 1893. Practiced as a physician twenty years. Located in Goessel, Kans., where he was instrumental in establishing a U. S. Post office and served as the first Post Master. Was instrumental in organizing an association which built the Bethesda Hospital in Goessel. Moved to Gotebo, Okla. in 1902 where he served the M. B. Church as presiding minister eight years and where he built a hospital, named Bethany. Moved to Bakersfield, Calif., in 1910 and later to Reedley, Calif., where he died May 28, 1937.

ROGALSKY, HERMAN—

Born in West Prussia, Sept. 19, 1859. Father died soon after his birth. Mother emigrated to the Old Colony in Russia. Converted and baptized when he was seventeen or eighteen. The family immigrated to America in 1885 and settled in Kansas. He was engaged in the flour milling industry in Marion, Buhler, and McPherson. He was a member of the M. B. Church and interested in its activities. He served the M. B. Conference on its Publication Committee many years and Tabor College on its Board of Directors for some time. He died in 1940.

ROSS, ADAM—

Born in Norge, Russia, Nov. 15, 1875. The family immigrated to America in 1878 and after staying at several places for short intervals, settled at Culbertson, Nebr. There Ross was converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church, in 1894. Married Mary Heitzenretter in 1896. Five children were born to them. Elected minister of the Culbertson M. B. Church in 1904 and ordained in 1909. Served the M. B. Conference for some time as traveling evangelist. In later years ministered to the small M. B. churches Hastings, Eldorado, and Jansen, in Nebr. Married Anna M. Hiebert in 1930. Died June 19, 1943.

RUSCH, HEINRICH—

Born in Oberdorf, Russia, Jan. 6, 1864. Married Christina Elizabeth Hergert in 1883. Four children were born. Married Elizabeth Kuxhaus in 1895. To them four children were born. Immigrated to America in 1887 and settled in Marion County, Kansas. Was converted and baptized in 1890. Moved to Okeene, Okla., where he lived on a farm until 1919, and afterward in the town of Okeene. He helped establish the Okeene, M. B. Church and was soon elected minister and ordained. Served the church as leader thirty years. Died March 21, 1943.

SAWATZKY, AARON G.—

Born in Andreasfeld, So. Russia, May 24, 1871. Converted at early age and joined M. B. Church. Married Elizabeth V. Niessen in 1891. They had six children. Immigrated to Canada in 1903 and settled at Aberdeen, Sask., where the family lived until 1920. Elected to the ministry and led the Aberdeen M. B. Church many years. Gifted as a music director and rendered a valuable ministry in the Canadian M. B. Conference by training choirs and promoting general singing. Composed numerous songs. Edited the "Saengerbote" for some time. Moved to California and lived at Lodi and Winton. Ordained to the ministry in 1930. Died in Oct., 1935.

SCHELLENBERG, ABRAHAM—

Born in Halbstadt, Molotschna, So. Russia, Aug. 29, 1845. Acquired a fair education by attending the schools in Tiegerweide and Tiege and a remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures by continuous and intensive study. Converted on Christmas Day, 1864. Joined the M. B. Church by baptism the following summer. Married Katharina Lohrenz, Feb. 25, 1868. They made their home in Tiegerweide and were blessed with seven children.—Shortly after baptism Schellenberg became an active worker in the Rueckenau M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry 1869, and to the leadership of the church in 1873. The church elected him elder in 1875 and ordained him the following year. He was a very influential leader and effective preacher in the M. B. Church in Russia from 1866 to 1879, traveling extensively and preaching in all the M. B. congregations. The Bible Conferences in Rueckenau begun in 1875, and which he usually led, became a prominent feature and proved to be a blessing to many. Schellenberg immigrated to America in the spring of 1879 and established his home on a farm southwest of Moundridge, Kans. His

first wife died in 1884 and on Feb. 17, 1885 he married Suzanna Flaming. Twelve children were born to them. He immediately became an active worker in the Ebenezer M. B. Church which had been organized shortly before his arrival. The church elected him presiding elder and he filled this position thirty years. He at once began to minister in other M. B. Churches and was helpful to them in organization, guidance, discipline, exhortation, and nurture in the Word. He filled a very important role in the M. B. Conference. He served as moderator eighteen times between the years 1880 and 1900. The Conference assigned to him evangelistic and itinerating work for sixteen years. He strongly urged the M. B. Conference to begin its own Foreign Mission, and when this was begun he was chosen chairman of the Committee and served for many years. He was among the first to advocate the publishing of a church paper and later continued to be a hearty supporter of the Publishing efforts of the Conference. He understood the importance and need of advance in education in the M. B. Church, and the Conference began the German Department School in McPherson, Kans, largely because of his influence. He encouraged the founding of Tabor College and continued to be a faithful supporter of the school.—Schellenberg moved to Escondido, Calif., in 1907, where he established an M. B. Church and served as minister until 1915. He again returned to Kansas, and retired after a fruitful ministry of fifty years. He died in Buhler, Kansas, April 11, 1920.

SCELLENBERG, ABRAHAM L.—

Born in the Molotschna Colony, So. Russia, May 30, 1869. Came with parents to America and settled southwest of Moundridge, Kans. Attended McPherson College and Rochester Theological Seminary. Taught public school in the vicinity of Buhler, Kans., twelve years. Converted in 1897 and joined the Ebenezer M. B. Church by baptism. This church later elected him to the ministry. Married Sarah Schroeder, Feb. 27, 1898. Ten children were born to them.—The M. B. Conference elected Schellenberg editor of the "Zionsbote" and business manager of this Publishing House in 1906 and in January, 1907 he assumed this work. The M. B. Publishing House was at that time transferred from Medford, Okla., to McPherson, Kans., and in 1913 to Hillsboro, Kans. Schellenberg served the Conference in its publishing work from 1907 to 1919 and again from 1923 to 1929, a total of nineteen years. He has served the M. B. General Conference as its secretary from 1907 to 1915. He advocated advance in education and served on the Board of Directors of Tabor College and was chairman of the same, for some time. He lived at Littlefield, Texas, 1919-1923, and at Coldwater, Texas, after 1929. In both localities he assisted in the M. B. Church as minister. He died at Hooker, Okla., April 11, 1941.

SCELLENBERG, DAVID—

Was one of the early leaders of the M. B. Church in Russia. Elected minister in the Rueckenau M. B. Church in 1876 and ordained in 1878. Elected elder in 1881 and ordained in 1883. Served the Church as elder until 1909 and the Conference in the Committee on Missions for many

years. Visited America in 1890 and again in 1913 and preached in many M. B. Churches.

SCHMIDT, CHRISTIAN—

Born in Constantinograd, Russia, Jan. 27, 1833. Attended several schools, including one in Kharkov. Converted during the revivals under Eduard Wuest, in 1835. Married Louise Blaess in 1855. When the brethren began to organize he joined them and was baptized in 1861. Elected minister in 1862. Left the Molotschna in 1866 and established his home in the Kuban Settlement. Served there as minister six years and returned to the Molotschna, where he worked as traveling evangelist for a number of years. Married Wilhelmine Bauman in 1875. The church chose him as elder in 1877. He returned to the Kuban Church in 1878 where he served twenty seven years longer and died there in 1906. He was an able leader and a man of strong influence in the M. B. Church in Russia.

SCHROEDER, HEINRICH P.—

Born in Gnadenheim, Molotschna, So. Russia, May 2, 1847. Married Maria Balzer in 1871. One son was born. Married Katharina Penner in 1873. Twelve children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1874 and settled at Henderson, Nebr. Converted in 1876 and joined the M. B. Church. Elected to the ministry shortly after baptism and ordained several years later. Moved to Kansas where he served the Goessel M. B. Church as presiding minister many years. Lived several years in Buhler, Kans., and later in Hillsboro, Kans. He served the M. B. Conference as treasurer of its educational Committee, during the time the Conference conducted the German Department School in McPherson, Kans. Married Mrs. Justina Radofsky in 1916. Died in Hillsboro, Kans., Feb. 28, 1919.

SEIBEL, CHRISTIAN—

Born in Bellegwich, Russia, Aug. 22, 1858. Came with parents to America in 1876 and settled in the Ebenfeld community, Marion County, Kans., where he lived all his life. Converted, baptized and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1878. Married Justina Schoel in 1880. Eight children were born to them. Second marriage to Carolina Delk. Sixteen children were born to them. He was active in the Church from the time of his conversion. Elected minister in 1906 and ordained 1907. Died Jan. 9, 1934.

SEIBEL, JOHN C.—

Born in Russia, in March, 1868. Immigrated to U. S. A. in 1876 and settled in the Ebenfeld community in Kansas. Converted in youth and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church by baptism. Married Katharina Delk in 1889. Seventeen children were born to them. Lived four years in Parktown, S. Dakota, and a short time in Colorado. Moved to N. Dakota in 1898, and settled in Harvey. Was a leading man in building up the M. B. Church at Harvey. The church chose him deacon and later ordained him. He served in this office thirty years. Died Oct. 6, 1937.

SEIBEL, LUDWIG—

Born in Neu Hamburg, So. Russia, Dec. 19, 1856. Married Charlotte Reimche. Seventeen children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1876. Lived a short time in Kansas, and twenty-three years at Wittenberg, S. Dakota. Moved to N. Dakota in 1900, where he settled on a farm near McClusky and later lived in the town McClusky. Converted and baptized and received into the M. B. Church in 1883. Elected to the ministry in 1887 and ordained in 1894 and served as minister forty two years. Helped in the founding and organizing of seven M. B. churches. Visited the Russian M. B. congregations in N. Dakota frequently and preached to them. Second marriage to Margareta Baumbach. Third marriage to Christina Bengler. Died July 20, 1936.

SIEMENS, JACOB B.—

Born on a farm in the southern part of McPherson County, Kans., Feb. 27, 1876. Converted in 1883 and joined the Ebenezer M. B. Church by baptism. Married Emilie Braun in 1897. They were blessed with six children. Moved to Corn, Okla., in 1904, where he lived the rest of his life. Active in Sunday School and Church. Devoted himself to evangelism and served the M. B. Southern District Conference as traveling evangelist, 1918-1924. Suffered acute rheumatism five years. Died Feb. 13, 1930.

STRAUSS, DAVID F.

Born in the Crimea, So. Russia, Feb. 3, 1871. The parents immigrated to U. S. A. in 1875 and settled in the community of Ebenfeld in Kans. There David was converted at sixteen and received into church by baptism. Married Katharina Heidebrecht in 1891. One daughter was born to them. Taught school in several localities in Kansas and at Corn, Okla. Was Bible colporteur for some time. Elected minister by the Ebenezer M. B. Church in Kansas, in 1913. In 1921 he was ordained. Taught in the Corn Bible Academy two years. Served as traveling evangelist in several of the District Conferences for a number of years. Served as minister in the churches, Inola, Okla., Gladwin, Mich., and Joes, Colo. Died April 4, 1941.

STRAUSS, FRIEDRICH F.—

Born in the Kuban Settlement, So. Russia, Sept. 6, 1867. Came with parents to America in 1875 and after a short stay in Ontario and Minnesota, settled in Kansas. Converted and received into the Ebenfeld M. B. Church by baptism in 1886. Married Cornelia Loewen in 1889. Eleven children were born to them. Located in Hamilton County, Kans., in 1906 at Inola, Okla., in 1912, and in Bessie, Okla., in 1939. Elected to the ministry at Inola and served the church many years. Died Feb. 3, 1949.

SUDERMAN, PETER—

Born in Pordenau, Russia, Aug. 26, 1870. Parents immigrated to the U. S. A. in 1879 and settled in the Ebenfeld community south of Hillsboro, Kans. There Peter Suderman grew up, was converted and joined the M. B. Church by baptism in 1897. Married Carolina Hein

in 1898. Ten children were born to them. Served the church as Sunday School superintendent many years and in 1919 was elected deacon. Ordained in 1925. Died in Hillsboro, Kans., May 1, 1947.

THIESSEN, HEINRICH AARON—

Born in Kleefeld, So. Russia, Dec. 30, 1857. Later immigrated to America and settled at Mountain Lake, Minn. There he was married, was converted, and by baptism joined the M. B. Church. Moved to Canada in 1901 and settled at Dalmeny, Sask. Lived at Hepburn, Sask., after 1918. Besides taking an important part in local church work, he served the Canadian M. B. Conference as treasurer of its Home Mission Committee about twenty years. Died July 1, 1930.

THIESSEN, JACOB W.—

Born in Schoenhorst So. Russia, Feb. 16, 1868. Spent his youth in Fuerstenlande, where he was converted and baptized in 1889. Married Helena Siemens in 1891. Elected minister in the M. B. Church, 1894. Immigrated to Canada in 1903. Lived at Winkler, Man., three years. Settled south of Herbert, Sask., in 1906 and had a leading part in the establishing of the M. B. churches in the Herbert Circuit. Ordained in 1907. Helped organize the Greenfarm M. B. Church in 1912 and became its minister and served the church fifteen years. The Canadian M. B. Conference found in Thiessen an able and consecrated worker. He served as secretary of the Home Mission Committee 1910-1927. Died Jan. 29, 1933.

TOEWS, HENRY F.—

Born in the Molotschna Colony, So. Russia, Feb. 17, 1879. The family immigrated to America shortly after his birth and settled southwest of Moundridge, Kans. Converted and baptized at fifteen and received into the Ebenezer M. B. Church. Attended Bethel College and McPherson College, where he received the A. B. degree. For theological training he attended the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., and Kansas City Baptist Theological Seminary. The latter institution conferred on him the B. D. degree. McPherson College conferred on him the D. D. degree. Toews entered the ministry in 1905 and for several years served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist. Ordained to the ministry in 1914. Married Agnes Flaming Aug. 9, 1908. Three children were born to them. From 1910 to 1940 he has been engaged chiefly in teaching; for the greater part of this time at Tabor College, where he taught Bible and Theology in the Theological College. One year he taught in the M. B. Bible School at Herbert, Sask. He was an active worker in the M. B. Conference, serving as secretary of the General Conference, 1924-1927. Edited the Sunday School quarterly for some time and wrote Sunday School lesson helps for the "Zionsbote" and the "Hillsboro Journal" many years. He wrote and published several books. The principal ones are, "Handbuch fuer Sonntagschul Lehrer," "Biblische Grundwahrheiten," "Jesus Kommt Wieder", and "Topical Outline Studies of Bible Doctrines." He died at Hillsboro, Kans., Jan. 15, 1942.

TOEWS, JOHANN—

Born in Fabrikwiese So. Russia, June 12, 1877. Received a good education in the Halbstadt Centralschule. Entered the teaching profession and taught in the Mennonite higher schools twenty-six years. Was converted and baptized in early life and joined the M. B. Church. Elected minister soon after joining the M. B. Church and later ordained as minister and elder. Served the M. B. Church at Ignatjewka as minister and the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist and Bible expounder. Was arrested and sent into concentration camp in Nov. 1929 and subjected to cruel treatment for more than three years. Died Feb. 21, 1933.

UNGER, ABRAHAM—

Born in the Chortiza Colony, Russia, in 1820. When the Brethren Movement began in this colony he was one of the early leaders. He was baptized at the first baptismal service in the colony and with the organization of the Einlage M. B. Church in 1862 he was elected minister and elder and later ordained. He served the M. B. Church in the Old Colony as elder from 1862 to 1876. Suffered severe persecution and for some time imprisonment during the early years of the M. B. Church. Died March 12, 1880.

UNRUH, GERHARD H.—

Born in Crimea, So. Russia, April 10, 1870, where he grew up, was converted, baptized, and joined the M. B. Church. Married Helena Voth in 1893. Thirteen children were born to them. They moved to New York in the settlement Iynathevka in 1914, where they passed through deep grief when three grown up children died of typhoid. Unruh was active in the church and served as Sunday School teacher and minister. Moved to Waldheim, Molotschna, in 1921. There he was ordained in 1922. Active in ministering to the heavily stricken and bereaved during the famine of 1921-'22. Served the Waldheim M. B. Church as presiding minister. Immigrated to Canada in 1925 and established his home in Steinbach, Man. Served the Steinbach M. B. Church as minister for some time. Was itinerating minister among M. B. Churches in Canada and U. S. A. several years. Died in Concordia Hospital, Winnipeg, Minn., April 22, 1934.

UNRUH, HEINRICH P.—

Born in Russian Poland, April 13, 1861. Immigrated to America in 1874 and settled at Marion, S. Dak. Converted and by baptism joined the M. B. Church at Silver Lake in 1880. Married Helena Nachtigal in 1880. Two children were born to them. Second marriage to Maria Wedel in 1892. Elected minister in 1899 and served the Silver Lake M. B. Church as leader twenty years. Later lived at Escondido, Calif., Buhler, Kans., and again at Marion, S. Dak. Died in Mountain Lake, Minn., April 22, 1934.

UNRUH, JOHANN B.—

Born in Lenof, Russian Poland, Feb. 19, 1857. Came with parents to America in 1875 and settled north of Hillsboro, Kans. Gave his heart to the Lord in the revival of 1880 and was received into the M. B. Church the following year by baptism. Married Helena Eckert in 1881. They were blessed with nine children. After living at Lehigh, Kans., for some time he moved to Fairview, Okla., in 1894. Elected to the ministry in the North Hoffnungsfeld M. B. Church in 1896 and ordained in 1901. He later moved to California where he assisted in the ministry in the Rosedale Church. Died April 9, 1927.

VOTH, HEINRICH—

Born in Gnadenheim, Gouv. Taurien, So. Russia, Feb. 19, 1851. Spent his early life in Rueckenau and received a good education in the local village school. Married Sarah Kornelsen, June 12, 1873, and established his home in Klippenfeld, where he taught school. During this time he was converted and made a deep religious experience. A remarkable revival also occurred in his school. Immigrated to America in 1876 and settled on a farm near Bingham Lake, Minn. Conducted a private school for three years during the winter months. Was baptized in June, 1877 and helped establish the Bingham M. B. Church. Led the Sunday School at first, then was elected minister and in 1885 was ordained elder. Served as presiding minister of the Church forty years. Voth was an active M. B. Conference worker and attended every General Conference convention from its beginning in 1879 until his death. Served as traveling evangelist and itinerating minister many years. Had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and gave valuable Bible addresses in the churches. He served the M. B. General Conference on various committees, and was chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions, 1909-1918. He was moderator of the General Conference fourteen years and of the Central District Conference fifteen years. Voth was blessed with a family of thirteen children. He died in Vanderhoof, British Columbia, Canada, Nov. 26, 1918.

VOTH, JOHN HOMER—

Born on a farm near Bingham Lake, Minn., Dec. 23, 1879. Converted at fifteen and by baptism joined the Bingham Lake M. B. Church. Attended the local school and the high school at Windom, Minn. Taught in rural schools several years. Attended the German Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., three years and graduated. Tabor College conferred on him the B. A. degree in 1918. Married Maria Epp, Aug. 18, 1907. They were blessed with eight children. Was traveling evangelist of the M. B. Conference, 1905-1907. Accepted by the Conference as missionary to India and after his ordination left for this field in 1908. Voth rendered valuable and effective services as itinerating missionary of the A. M. B. Mission to the Telugus in the Hyderabad State of India. Erected most of the buildings on the Deverakonda Station, where he did the major part of his service. He was successful in winning converts, training indigenous workers, and establishing churches. When he finally

left India in 1942 after a period of thirty-four years' service, there were seventeen local churches with more than three thousand members in the Deverakonda Field. He began the monthly Telugu paper, "Suvarthamani," in 1920, which became the official organ of the Andhra M. B. Church. Through his frequent writing for the "Zionsbote" and through his aggressive itineraries while on furlough, he created much interest for the cause of foreign missions in the M. B. Church. He returned from India in 1942 and made his home in Tulsa, Okla., where he died July 29, 1943.

WALL, PETER C.—

Born in So. Russia, Jan. 29, 1857. Educated in local school and Central Schule. Taught in Mennonite village schools in Russia twenty-four years. Later taught several years in America. Converted in 1866. Immigrated to America about 1877 and settled on a farm in Harvey County, Kansas. Was baptized in 1879 and joined the M. B. Church and helped establish the Ebenezer M. B. Church. Elected minister in 1879 and served thirty-two years. Married Maria Wiens in 1858. Nine children were born to them. Moved to Buhler, Kans., in 1906, where he died in Jan., 1912.

WARKENTIN, JOHANN—

Born in Nieder Chortiza So. Russia, Sept. 29, 1859. Immigrated to Canada in 1879 and settled on a farm southwest of Winkler, Man. Had a fair education and taught school eight years. Married Sarah Loewen in 1881, and established his home on a farm. They were blessed with ten children. Converted and baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1890. Active in the church. Taught in Sunday School and directed the singing. Elected to the ministry and ordained in 1895. Presiding minister of the Winkler M. B. Church, 1906-1930. Frequently ministered to the smaller surrounding churches. Active in the M. B. Conference and for some time a member on the Board of Directors for Foreign Missions. After death of first wife married Mrs. Elizabeth Hooze Dyck. Died at Winkler, Man., May 18, 1948.

WEDEL, CORNELIUS P.—

Born in Alexanderwohl, So. Russia, Aug. 14, 1836. Spent childhood in village Waldheim. Prepared for teaching. Began to teach in 1855. Joined Mennonite Church in 1856. Married Helena Wiebe in 1859. Second marriage to Eva Pankratz in 1866. Immigrated together with most of the members of the Alexanderwohl Church to America in 1874 and settled in the southwestern part of Marion County, Kansas. They retained the name Alexanderwohl for their congregation. His church called him to the ministry. In 1880 he, however, was led to join the M. B. Church at Goessel, Kansas. He became the first minister of the Goessel M. B. Church and was ordained elder several years later, and ministered to the Church twenty years. He was an outstanding M. B. Conference worker and served for some time on its first Mission Committee. He traveled as evangelist for many years and performed a worthy itinerating ministry. His son C. H. Wedel became the first president of

Bethel College and his son P. H. Wedel, a missionary to the Cameroons, Africa. He preached his last sermon at Hillsboro, Kans., on Luke, Chapter one. Died Jan. 25, 1900.

WEDEL, PETER H.—

Born in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, So. Russia, about 1865. Came with his parents to America in 1874 and settled near Goessel, Marion County, Kans. Received his education partly in Russia and partly in America. Attended Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., where he was supported by a "Schulverein" with the hope that he would later establish a school for the M. B. Church. After completing seminary he devoted himself to evangelism and served the M. B. Church as evangelist, 1888-1895. Conducted effective evangelistic campaigns in M. B. Churches in Kansas, Nebraska, S. Dakota, and Minnesota, which led to sweeping revivals and to the conversion of many. Wedel felt called to go as a foreign missionary. The M. B. Church, at that time not having its own foreign mission field, he decided to go under the German Baptist Mission Society. He married Martha Liebig in 1895 and they left for Cameroon, Africa, stopping in Germany on the way and also making a visit to South Russia. In both countries he conducted evangelistic campaigns. Thereupon he proceeded to Cameroon. After two years of effective service on this mission field, his health broke down and he was compelled to leave. He died on the voyage to Europe, Aug. 10, 1897, and was buried at sea.

WIEBE, ABRAHAM J.—

Born in Gnadenfeld, Molotschna, So. Russia, June 20, 1873. His parents immigrated to U. S. A. in 1879 and settled near Bingham Lake, Minn. Converted in 1887 and by baptism joined the M. B. Church. Married Susanna Ewert in 1894. Twelve children were born to them. Elected minister in 1899 and later ordained. Served as presiding minister of the Bingham Lake M. B. Church, 1918-1941. Served many years as chairman of the City Mission Committee of the General Conference. Second marriage to Mrs. J. K. Dick in 1944. Died in Mountain Lake, Minn., May 22, 1947.

WIEBE, HENRY D.—

Born at Hillsboro, Kans., Dec. 12, 1889. There he grew up, was converted in 1912 and joined the M. B. Church by baptism. Received his education in Hillsboro Mennonite Academy; Tabor College; Teacher's College, Weatherford, Okla., where he received the M. A. degree in 1938. He later received the Th. B. degree from Tabor College. Married Gertrude Klaassen in 1919. Four children were born to them. He served the M. B. churches of the various District Conferences as traveling evangelist from 1916 to 1936, and was ordained in 1917. Taught in public schools 1914-1918. At the same time he served as minister of various community churches in that locality. Was instructor in German and Bible in Tabor College, 1936-1939. Went to California in 1939 and served as minister of the M. B. Churches, Shafter 1939-1945, Rosedale 1945-1947, and Lodi 1947-1949. Wiebe was an active M. B. Conference worker,

and served the Southern District Conference as secretary of the Home Mission Committee, 1930-1936 and the Pacific District Conference as secretary of the Home Mission Committee 1942-1949. He served the M. B. General Conference on its Committee for Reference and Counsel a number of years, and as M. B. General Conference moderator 1945-1948. He died at Reedley, Calif., July 10, 1949.

WIEBE, PETER Z.—

Born at Hillsboro, Kans., Jan. 20, 1881. Converted in youth and joined the Gnadenu K. M. B. Church by baptism. Married Maria Kliewer in 1908. Five children were born to them. Moved to Hooker, Okla., shortly after marriage and settled on a farm. There he joined the M. B. Church. Attended Moody Bible Institute and Tabor College. Entered the ministry and served the M. B. Church at Ulysses, Kans., for some time. Served on the Board of Trustees of Tabor College several years. Moved to Reedley, Calif., where he died Oct. 21, 1942.

WIENS, BERNHARD F.—

Born near Henderson, Nebr., March 20, 1881. Converted and baptized at twelve and joined the M. B. Church. Felt the Lord's call for service and prepared himself for it. Attended school at Berne, Ind., and at Cleveland, Ohio, a little later. Married Sarah Lohrenz in 1903. Four children were born to them. Worked in the Lake Superior Mission in Superior, Wisconsin. In 1907 the M. B. Conference accepted Mr. and Mrs. Wiens as its city missionaries and they conducted a mission at Hurley, Wis., a mining town. They went to Minneapolis, Minn., in 1910 where they began and conducted the South Side Mission of the M. B. Church one year. They moved to Hillsboro, Kans., in 1911, where Mr. Wiens attended Tabor College. He graduated with the B. A. degree in 1916, and was accepted by the Conference as missionary for India. Since he was not able to go to India at that time he taught in Tabor College three years. He went as missionary to China in December, 1920, where he took charge of the school at Shanghang in the A. M. B. Mission. Under his management the school grew in attendance from twenty three pupils to one hundred seventy seven pupils in less than two years. He died in China, Nov. 30, 1922.

WIENS, FRANZ J.—

Born on a farm near Henderson Nebr., June 30, 1880. Converted at an early age and joined the Henderson M. B. Church. Felt God's call to the foreign mission field. Attended the German Department School of the M. B. Church at McPherson, Kans., and the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y. Later Tabor College granted him the B. A. degree. Married Agnes Harder in 1902. Five children were born to them. Served the M. B. Conference as traveling evangelist 1906-1910, and conducted many successful revival meetings. Was ordained as missionary in 1910 and went to China by way of Russia. Conducted a number of revival meetings in M. B. churches in Russia. Upon arrival in China in fall, 1911, he spent some time at Swatow to learn the Chinese language. Mr. and Mrs. Wiens then proceeded inland and began an

independent M. B. Mission at Shanghang, Fukien Province. They erected the required buildings for a mission station, evangelized the field, established an indigenous church, opened and conducted a school for children, established a Bible School for training native workers, and began a hospital. The M. B. Conference took over the support and supervision of the Mission in 1919. Wiens was able to work as missionary in China until 1940, though with considerable interruption on account of unrest and revolution in the land. His first wife died in China in 1935. Wiens later married Agnes Koop, and they continued in the work. Wiens has written many reports of the work for the "Zionsbote." He wrote the two books about the Shanghang Mission: "Pionierarbeit unter den Hakkas in Sued-China," and "Fifteen Years Among the Hakkas of South China." He died at Reedley, Calif., Sept. 28, 1942.

WIENS, GERHARD—

Born in Grossweide, So. Russia, Feb. 1, 1868. Came with parents to America in 1870 and settled near Henderson, Nebr. Converted, baptized and joined the M. B. Church in 1882. Married Marie Wiens in 1890. They established their home on a farm near Henderson and were blessed with a large family. Elected to the ministry in 1898 and ordained two years later. Active worker in the M. B. Central District Conference where he at times served as secretary, chairman, and as member on various committees. He also served the M. B. General Conference on its Educational Board a number of years. Died at Henderson, Nebr., May 13, 1940.

WIENS, JACOB GERHARD—

Born in So. Russia, Feb. 18, 1857. After attending village schools he enriched his education remarkably through continuous study. He especially gained a good knowledge of the Scriptures. Married Anna Balzer about 1878. To them seven children were born. Was converted shortly after marriage. Joined the Mennonite Church where he was elected to the ministry. Later he joined the M. B. Church and was elected and ordained minister at Rueckenau. He moved to Siberia about 1900 where he had a leading part in establishing the M. B. congregations and ministered to all of them. He resided at Omsk and later at Pavlodar and served as leader of the local church in both places. Ordained elder about 1907 and served the Siberia M. B. churches many years. During the First World War and the years following he suffered many hardships. He died in a prison at Irkutsk, Siberia, about 1933. His brother J. G. Wiens and his son Frank Wiens were missionaries in India.

WIENS, JACOB W.—

Born in Crimea, So. Russia, March 4, 1866. Came with parents to America in 1876 and settled south of Hillsboro, Kans. Converted and joined the Ebenfeld M. B. Church in 1882. Married Anna Leppke in 1888. Fourteen children were born to them. Wiens rendered valuable service in his local church and Sunday School. His most important service has been that of treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions of the M. B.

Conference, 1915-1935. Was for some time member of the Mennonite Board for Colonization. Served as County Commissioner of Marion County, Kansas, for a number of years. Died in March, 1936.

WIENS, JOHANN—

Born in Rosenort, Molotschna, So. Russia, Oct. 1, 1848. Married Margareta Dick in 1872. Eight children were born to them. Immigrated to America in 1875 and settled in Cottonwood County, Minn. Converted and after several years joined the M. B. Church at Bingham Lake by baptism in 1882. Elected to the ministry in 1885 and later ordained. Devoted himself to the ministry many years, until his strength failed. Died at Mountain Lake, Minn., July 1, 1938.

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250